

Mapping the Paradoxes of Multiethnicity:
Stories of Multiethnic Women in Toronto, Canada

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Abstract

This thesis examines questions of identity among multiethnic (or “mixed race”) women through a qualitative analysis of twenty-four open-ended interviews conducted in Toronto, Canada. It is primarily concerned with exploring how multiethnic women contest, challenge and negotiate their identities in relation to socially constructed racialized categories.

The thesis demonstrates how the multiethnic woman has been positioned as “out of place” in a historical and social context. Through the empirical analysis, it examines how women of multiethnicity in this study mobilize both their gendered and racialized selves in powerful ways. The cartographies of belonging among multiethnic women in this study are documented, with an emphasis upon the ways they forge alliances with others. The thesis proposes alternative readings of the multiethnic experience outside of oppressive representations.

Engaging with vocabularies in cultural and feminist geography, the thesis explores the potential of conceiving of the multiethnic individual in a way that spills over the analytical categories of race and gender. In conclusion, it suggests future avenues in feminist geography by calling for a profound rethinking of those categories of identity which currently frame our analyses.

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"Race and geography have one important trait in common. They are both arbitrary systems of (dis)organization" (Scales-Trent 1995:130)

"We learn to read maps right side up, as geometric allegories of the outside world. But [are] there other ways of seeing maps?" (Moss 1996:1)

Contesting old categories - creating new cartographies

1.1 INTRODUCTION

"Shall we consider race?" I say to you...you might hear this as an invitation to a kind of conversation we have not shared before, a leap of faith into knowing more about each other" (Williams 1997:35)

In this thesis, I invite my reader to travel with me as I map the paradoxical terrains of multiethnicity. I will attempt to unravel the tangled threads of race, gender, place and nation by engaging with narratives from multiethnic women in Toronto, Canada, drawing from theoretical insights in feminist geography and my own experiences as a multiethnic woman to contest old categories and create new cartographies of identity.

I will explore the thoughts and feelings about race among women of multiethnicity in Toronto in a context whose focal point is identity. The empirical material which follows is based upon a series of in-depth, qualitative, open-ended interviews with twenty-four women of multiethnicity who have spent the majority of their lives in Toronto. My interests lie in exploring how multiethnic women contest, challenge and negotiate identity in relation to gendered, racial and national categories. The interrelationship among race, nation, gender and identity has profound implications for those of us who claim descent across racial lines - yet research on multiethnic individuals in Canada remains limited (Ray 1996; Camper 1994).

We often write about what moves us. I chose to write about the experience of multiethnicity because of the ways it has touched my own life. The desire to pursue this research project originates through my own personal background as a multiethnic woman from Toronto, Canada.

As such, I have spent a great deal of my life being asked to define my identity within socially constructed categories. Perhaps a short anecdote will illustrate what initially fuelled my desire to pursue this study. I was in Hawaii a few years ago and I was strolling alone along the boardwalk, the sun dappled waters sparkling as the sun began its slow descent into the ocean. Suddenly, a woman ran up to me and tugged my t-shirt excitedly. "Excuse me", she stammered.

"I know this must seem pretty forward, but do you mind me asking where you're from?" Before I could respond, she exclaimed, "No, no let me guess! Moroccan, right? No no, Algerian!" I experience variations on this episode at least once a week and despite that frequency, I still don't know how to respond to a question about my heritage without launching into a whole history of explanation. Am I Indian? Iranian? or Indian-Iranian Canadian? Although I feel as Canadian as "snow and ice" (Philip 1992:17), I am often not considered Canadian despite my almost feverish patriotism in what I see as, to quote the Canadian national anthem, "my home and native land." My response shifts continually as I sometimes, it seems, flailingly, search for a way to map out my identity. As a result, I've been alternatively tired and thrilled throughout my life when people have asked me this completely ambiguous question, "Where are you from?" On an academic front, I was curious as to what kind of theory could be developed from thinking about some of these issues. Home, for me, means being in a presence of inbetweenness, which is constantly being recoded, reinscribed, and re-racialized. I am neither black nor white¹ yet marginalized as both and neither in different contexts. These sorts of nagging thoughts led me to pursue a study on women of multiethnicity in Toronto in order to try and pencil in some new paths for fellow travellers.

It is no mere coincidence which led me to pursue this empirical analysis in the discipline of geography. There are particular reasons why I have chosen to explore multiethnicity in this field. Friends have eyed me up oddly when I proudly describe myself as a geographer, protesting, "But you're not studying soil erosion - or colouring in maps with vividly-shaded pencil crayons!" Perhaps in a way, I'm still that buck-toothed sixth-grader, intensely poring over the map of Canada, debating whether or not to use "forest green" or "shamrock". But now I purposely colour outside the map-lines of discourse, using language instead of pencil crayons.

¹ The reader will note that I do not clarify here what I mean by the terms "white" or "black". I have decided not to do so deliberately, as the way these terms are employed, and the meanings associated with these phrases fluctuate. Identifying (or being identified as) black or white reflects various stages of racialization as I will explore throughout the thesis.

For, as Stuart Hall maintains, "identities are constructed within, as opposed to outside, discourse" (Hall 1990:222). What better way to deconstruct identity than by colouring outside the lines?

On a less flippant (not to mention personal) note, I believe human geography can provide the necessary tools to chart methods of daily living and surviving in the postmodern world, which calls for a drastic revision of previous models of identity. Geographers may be ideally suited to capture the rapidly shifting registers and modalities of the forces that shape everyday life. The idea that all social relations are spatial, and take place within particular physical contexts, is pretty much taken for granted among geographers (Kobayashi and Peake 1994). It follows therefore that racism creates particular spatial patterns and codes through which spatial and racial domination is maintained. Geographers can grasp the lingering effects of these dominant spatial formations by recognizing the extent to which racism has infiltrated and coded the use of space.

Furthermore, I believe that feminist geography offers a particularly rich terrain in order to address my growing dissatisfaction with the "discourse on difference," a paradigm I will explore further in chapter two, and in particular my concern with the literature on fluid and fragmented identities (Bhabha 1994; Hall 1990). Although I have been fascinated by the work of cultural theorists working on identity, I was curious as to why few scholars had as of yet actually "grounded" their suppositions through empirical analyses (although see Dwyer 1997; Alexander 1996). I will explore the literature on emerging identity and ask if there are ways to incorporate the primary daily realities from which our textual representations emerge.

I was also driven to explore multiethnicity in an academic context because my own experience of multiethnicity seems to be radically different from the literature on "mixed race" individuals. I have shared in countless conversations with other multiethnic individuals throughout my life, and inevitably, we have remarked upon the paucity of literature available on how we negotiate and challenge interpretations of our racialized identities. Although we are witnessing a proliferation of new texts exploring the experiences of multiethnicity (Ifekwunigwe forthcoming; Root 1996; Camper 1994) few studies have yet to explain how individuals negotiate their ethnic identities in different places. Again, I feel feminist geographers are in an

ideal situation to explore these dynamics. Bondi, a feminist geographer, explores the potential of turning a politics of identity into a politics of location, an idea which very much drives this thesis (Bondi 1993:98). Like Bondi, I believe that a renewed emphasis upon *where one is* allows questions of identity to be thought through in new ways. I use this idea as a point of departure towards the exploration of a feminist geography which reaches out to unravel the complexities of racialization within particular places. Feminist geographers offer potential maps of routes towards understanding everyday lived experience among women. I will provide an experience-rooted analysis of multiethnic women, attending to the particular concrete of their day-to-day lives.

I wish to explain briefly why I chose to investigate the voices of participants in Toronto, Canada. It has been proposed that among the factors and criteria affecting the experience of multiethnicity, environment plays a significant role (Root 1996; Root 1990). Keeping this in mind, I decided to limit my focus to Canada, and in particular, Toronto. It is projected that by the year 2006, almost thirty percent of the Canadian population will claim origins other than British, French or First Nations (Department of Canadian Heritage 1991) thus the research has a particular salience. I conducted research in Canada's largest urban centre because it has the largest ethnic population in Canada according to government statistics (Henry and Tator 1985:321). I deliberately chose to carry out research in a city with a diverse ethnic population as it has been suggested that multiethnic individuals growing up in more racially oppressive parts of the country are less likely to have freedom to choose their racial identity (Root 1990). I also experience a particular fondness for Toronto, given that it is the city that I have lived in the majority of my life. In the next section of this chapter, I explore the paradoxes of race in order to set the stage for this study.

1.2 RACE 101: THE PARADOX OF RACE

"To study race...is to enter into a world of paradox" (Omi and Winant 1994:xi)

"To say "race" seems to imply that "race" is real...but "race" has been the history of an untruth...the truth of racism as a lie: that is what we need to unpack before we successfully put behind us the ugly and brutal regime of race" (Radhakrishnan 1996:81)

The next section illuminates the concept of race as a social invention. Somerset Maugham (1944) in The Razor's Edge warns the reader that he can very well skip a particular section of the chapter without losing the thread of the story; indeed, I would be surprised if the reader did not already understand many of the concepts I will discuss here. But, like Somerset Maugham, I concur that "except for this conversation, I should not perhaps have found it worthwhile to write this book" (Maugham 1944:218). In this section, I attempt to unravel the arbitrary connections of anatomical features and political meaning, where certain physical differences (like skin colour and hair type) have been used to indicate significant emotional differences between individuals.

Race has predominantly come to be viewed as a social construction based on an arbitrary affiliation of phenotypical characteristics with social and cultural inferiority and superiority. However, I still encounter bewildered looks and blank stares when I state unequivocally to others, "race is a social construction." It remains systematic and is therefore a powerful mode of division. Although race is so powerful that it can eclipse gender, ethnicity, class and other forms of social stratification, race remains deceptively difficult to discuss. A particularly revealing definition of race-thinking follows:

"[a] tangle of quarrels, a confusion of assertions, a knot of facts and fictions that revolt the intellect and daunt the courage of the most persistent. In its mazes, race-thinking is its own best refutation. If sense and logic can lead to truth, not a single system of race-classification can be true" (Barzun 1938:94).

Despite Barzun's claim that not a single system of race classification can be true, myths about race seem to survive. Race remains ubiquitous, and there is this murky acceptance in popular discourse that the world is divided into specific races - which are easily identifiable and always stable categories. However, race, despite popular widespread belief, has little to do with biology (Reddy 1994). Race is a social invention.

Race is a regulatory fiction, an imaginary construction with its origins in biological myths. There remains a profound and painful relationship between perceived phenotypes (physical characteristics) and genotypes (biological and genetic characteristics). Phenotype remains the main determinant of race division, which includes, but is certainly not limited to, skins, hair

texture and facial features (Young 1995). Scientists have agreed that race is a social construction rather than a biological fact. Genetic features do not absolutely define one population and keep it distinct from another. Biologists argue that any distinction among human races is "but an appropriate shorthand for statistical tendencies in the distribution frequencies of some four per cent of human genes over very large population samples" (Baumann 1996:18). This fact continues to astonish society at large as Marin states:

"Just recently, a front-page story reported that science had yet again proved that no race gene exists. Science has proved that point many times now, yet every generation or so it makes headlines" (Marin 1996:113)

Thus the paradox of race is revealed: race does not exist, yet it remains a salient feature in the public imagination. Society uses these false divisions to categorize individuals within social, political orders and they in turn determine our economic realities about power and class. These social constructions have become fully embedded in social relations, political interactions and economic structures. In other words, ideas about race explain the character and individual structure of social communities and the fate of human societies. Racial categories are about who has power and prestige, and who experiences disadvantage and discrimination. They are insidious models of inclusion and exclusion, where seemingly "real" or "manufactured" biological differences are used to explain and justify social inequalities and justice. Omi and Winant explain how identity is determined by race through the notion of racial formation as follows:

"The process by which social, economic and political forces determine the content and importance of racial categories and by which they are in turn shaped by racial meanings" (Omi and Winant 1994:60)

Race is deployed as a shorthand to clues about a person's identity, a central axis of social relations, and a category of social organization central to structures, institutions, and social discourses. One's racial identity can determine "the allocation of resources, and frame political issues and conflicts" (Omi and Winant 1994:61). Obviously, "race matters" (West 1993:1)

The politics of race is a competition over socially constructed definitions, which in turn defines individuals' place in the world. This thesis is concerned with those individuals who "trouble"

racial lines. I argue that the most salient points about race are the supposed boundaries between them. The mere presence of individuals who define themselves as “mixed race” challenge racial categories. Multiethnic individuals have the potential to become “race traitors” (Ignatiev 1996) as they defy any simplistic racial classification. This thesis will begin to develop new ways of seeing the racialized and gendered embodiment of multiethnic subjects by providing a critical analysis of the naturalization of racial categories and the multiethnic woman’s place in the world.

Race and ethnicity In this section, I want to clarify the differences between the notions of “race” and “ethnicity”. I will propose my own definitions of ethnicity in this section in order to provide some clarification. These two terms are often confused, and one reason for the proliferation of racial categories is the conflation of the terms “ethnicity” and “race”. Ethnicity is a term that is widely applied, but it is difficult to define its differences from the notion of “race”. I suggest that the conflation between ethnicity and race reflects a polarized dimension based on visibility, where the black-white binary is immediately invoked and race becomes the marked term designating “black” or “people of colour”, whereas “white” remains suspiciously unmarked. This is most evident in discussions in US social science literature about assimilation, where the race of European immigrants is seemingly invisible, thus replaced by ethnicity (Cornell 1996). European immigrants are often not defined by race, but by ethnicity. In contrast, many post-colonial immigrants are defined by race and their ethnic affiliations are ignored, despite the fact that these ethnic boundaries may actually prove more salient in their construction of identity. As a woman of multiethnicity, I have continually been struck by the reductionist and dualistic polarized conceptions of a “racial” and “ethnic” identity inherent in much discussion on mainstream discourse on race, where issues of race have continually been framed by a consistent black/white divide. I will now show how race and colour has been constructed as immutable facts through a pseudo-scientific discourse, while ethnicity has emerged from notions of culture and values.

Anthony Smith (1997) explains how the term ethnicity entered the Oxford English dictionary as a “socially acceptable” replacement for the term “race” in 1952. He insists that from a subjective standpoint, people share myths, symbols and traditions, including myths of descent,

and hence the term ethnicity has come to describe these affiliations. Smith contends that most individuals are born into ethnic communities and subscribe to that status. Thus, ethnicity comes to be seen as containable and static categories of identification linked to biological origins.

Malik (1996) provides an important critique of Smith's definition by insisting that the term ethnicity was promoted as an alternative definition to race. Drawing from the work of Chapman who notes: "ethnicity is just race after attempts to take the biology out" (Chapman 1993:21), Malik asserts that ethnicity has come to replace race as a politically acceptable means of describing social differences, where race describes differences created by biological distinctions, and ethnicity subsequently describes cultural distinctions (Malik 1996:175). While ethnicity may do away with seemingly "objective" biological distinctions, at the same time it introduces the notion of subjective cultural differences. Phenotype becomes the key element in the reproduction of ethnic boundary markers, continuing to show that the world is divided into people based upon physical appearance (Malik 1996:176)

In short, ethnicity is often as essentialized as race. Kohn (1997) argues that people seem to think that an ethnic sense is innate - and that very idea insinuates that it cannot be analyzed or critiqued. Kohn encourages us to look at the history of evolution in order to dismantle the socially hierarchies that have been so carefully created. He insists our lineage is not part of our evolved nature, and that human beings have the capacity to be part of several identities at once (Kohn 1997). Kohn contends that people have the ability to transcend ethnic ties. Ignatieff (1997) extends Kohn's argument by proposing ethnicity as a sense of moral choices. Asking what kinds of human agency are implied through the critiques of ethnicity, Ignatieff asserts that we are the authors of our own ethnicity and the descriptive sociology he engages in on the ground is powerfully freighted with the notion that identity is fluid, shaped by power and privilege. It remains that biological associations with both ethnicity and race continue to proliferate with a tenacity which is staggering, where the expectation is that "cultural differences are founded in natural ones" (Baumann 1996:16).

I will argue in this thesis that the concept of ethnicity must be unpacked and unveiled as a complex social construction and interpreted within particular socio-spatial contexts as many

writers have suggested (Zack 1995; Root 1992; Hall 1990). I borrow largely from Cornell (1996) who argues that ethnicity is a form of identification, a cultural preference rather than a natural orientation. Ethnicity is a relational term and employed differently in different contexts. Social distinctions made on the basis of national, linguistic, or caste criteria are thought to mark differences in ethnicity, and thus, ethnic boundaries, like racial boundaries, are invented. This means that almost anyone who is singled out as “ethnic” can be given a whole range of “ethnic labels” that can be declared, or rendered, socially relevant or irrelevant (Baumann 1996:19). Thus, an individual has a wide range of “ethnic options” (Waters 1990) while others may not be prescribed an ethnicity at all.

I suggest a focus upon racialization, rather than race classification, in order to shed light upon the possibilities of varied ethnic identifications. To this end, I have been greatly influenced by the work of Robert Miles (1988). Miles proposes the notion of racialization which refers to the process of being racially marked, and that it must be understood in its geographical and historical specificity:

“Racialization is a political or ideological process by which particular populations are identified by direct or indirect reference to their real or imagined phenotypical characteristics in such a way as to suggest that populations can only be understood as a supposed biological unity” (Miles 1988:12).

Thus, it is important to locate racial meanings and interpretations within a specific geographical and historical framework. The discourse on race is subject to constant change and linked to language groups, religion, custom, dress and other physical signifiers. I have attempted to illustrate the ways in which ethnicity and race are often conflated. If race and ethnicity are similar, it is in that they are both at once static and dynamic, rigid and fluid, socially dictated and individually defined, as Teresa Kay Williams notes:

“The lines of demarcation and the social forces of self/group identification (based on race and ethnicity) continue to persist, while their definitions continually undergo shifts, changes, and transformations” (Williams 1995:318).

Why multiethnic? Given that I have adopted the use of “multiethnic” to describe participants (a choice I describe in greater detail in chapter three) it is important to clarify what I mean by

the term “ethnic”. Like Hall (1990) I am familiar with the dangers of ethnicity as a concept. As Baumann warns, “the word “ethnic” cannot be taken at face value as a descriptive term” (Baumann 1996:17). There are innumerable definitions of ethnicity available in critical race theory. For example, Scales-Trent points out, “[Ethnicity] may be only faint harkings, vague memories, wistful longings” (1995:135). Isajiw insists that ethnicity represents “an involuntary group of people who share the same culture or descendants of such people who identify themselves and/or are identified by others as belonging to the same involuntary group” (Isajiw 1985:16). However, as will be evident in the body of the thesis, I prefer to take into consideration the particular *agency*² that individuals employ in deciding how they will represent their ethnicity in day- to- day encounters. To do so, I draw upon the work of Stuart Hall (1990) who acknowledges the place of history, language and culture in the construction of identity formation and subjectivity. Hall reconceptualizes new formulations of ethnicity as a recognition that “we all speak from a particular place, out of a particular history, out of a particular experience, without being contained...we are all...ethnically located and our ethnic identities are crucial to our subjective sense of who we are” (Hall 1992:227). Borrowing largely from Hall, I propose ethnicity as a momentary configuration of voluntary choices about cultural affiliation, a socially constructed way of creating and sustaining particular group boundaries, or an affinity to a group in which processes of inclusion and exclusion coexist on the basis of a variety of factors. These include, but are not limited to, ancestry, lineage, perceived shared genetics, religion, language, culture, and historical continuity.

Similarly, I have used the word “multiethnic” instead of the phrase “mixed race” to describe participants in this study. This is because I feel that the figure of race can obscure, or even prevent, promising epistemological and pedagogical analyses of racialized experiences in the social. Using the term “mixed race” to describe informants may be seen as being in historical opposition to the possibility of putting forth a various range of racialized experiences to work

²Agency is a contested term and as such I will attempt to specify what I mean by the concept. Borrowing from Giddens (1991) and Butler (1990) I understand agency to mean the potential of individuals to critically reflect upon situations towards the ongoing participation of their own subjectivity. As I will argue in chapter seven, however, not all of these actions are necessarily purposive or “make a difference” (Giddens 1991). In this context, I use the term in order to describe the potential of “positive development in the social, discursive constitution of identities” (Weir 1996:128) but agency would obviously not be defined in this way in other contexts.

theoretically in new and exciting ways. It has become common practice in the social sciences to place the word “race” in inverted commas to indicate its arbitrary connection to anatomical features (see Jackson and Penrose 1993). However, I have decided not to put the word “race” in scare quotes throughout the thesis. I echo the beliefs of Kobayashi and Peake who claim that “scare quoting gives [race] an un-natural quality, as though “races” could be de-constructed if only racism were sufficiently resisted” (Kobayashi and Peake 1994:231). Like Montagu, I feel that “one cannot combat racism by enclosing the word [race] in quotes” (Montagu 1952:284). Although the practice does belabour a point - namely, that “although racism exists, race itself does not” (Todorov 1986:370) - I deliberately do not use inverted commas around the term in order to remind the reader of the very real ways that ideas around race continue to proliferate.

I hope that this “race 101” section has explained how racial categories only serve to create a social order which controls the flow of moral rights and obligations, as well as the materiality of privilege. As Somerset Maugham would say, “so much for that” (Maugham 1944:219).

1.3 STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS

The remainder of this thesis is divided into seven chapters. The theoretical exploration which frames my approach in the following empirical chapters begins in chapter two, entitled “Racial Refiguring: developing “un-natural” discourses in feminist geography”. In this chapter, I marry ideas emerging from feminist geography and critical race theory in order to propose both some renewed challenges to the field.

In the methodology chapter, “Same Differences? Challenging insider/outsider positionings”, I explore in greater detail the contradictory nature of a “multiethnic” population by introducing the participants in this study, as well as delving more deeply into my own complicit positioning as a multiethnic woman who has conducted the research.

Chapter four, “Interrogating Hyphen-nation: Canadian multicultural policy and multiethnic identities” begins the empirical analysis by setting some ground work: namely, by introducing a brief history of the Canadian multicultural project. It then proceeds to explore the ways in which participants contemplated their own complex relationship to national and ethnic identity.

In "Complexion: racing through whiteness", chapter five, I challenge the growing literature on whiteness by investigating the ways in which participants positioned themselves in relation to white identity. I will argue that many participants negotiate perceptions of themselves as both non-white and white, where subjectivity becomes a function of one's racialized location in the social structure.

I propose the development of a new spatial metaphor in chapter six, "I'm a blonde haired, blue eyed black girl: mapping mobile paradoxical spaces", in order to examine the ways in which participants contemplated the label of "mixed race" to identify themselves. I also demonstrate some of the more complicated affinities and alliances participants forge with others in situations which are both ridden with racialized and gendered meanings.

The last empirical chapter, chapter seven, entitled, "Tricking the border guards: performing race" chronicles the ways in which participants enact complex racialized performances in order to disrupt constraining, oppressive and dichotomous readings of their ethnic identity. Drawing upon the work of Judith Butler (1990) I map out racialized performativity in the social landscape by exploring how participants often pretend to be of various ethnicities, thus demonstrating how race is a social invention.

In my concluding chapter "Reconciling the solitudes" I draw upon my empirical work to make speculations regarding future routes for feminist geography. In particular, I discuss the possibilities of shared coalitions among women who emphasize affinities and connections. Finally, to summarize, this thesis will attempt to address the following questions:

*How do women of multiethnicity negotiate, challenge and contest perceptions of their racialized and gendered identities?

*Can we develop new ways of seeing the racialized and gendered interpretation of the multiethnic woman which take into consideration the social constructedness of racial categories?

*How can we think theoretically beyond the discourse on difference towards belonging through differences in feminist geography?

Let us now turn to chapter two, in which I will explain how racial divides have emerged out of unequal power relations of colonialization, imperialism and nineteenth century pseudo-scientific discourses. These categories exist primarily to impose intellectual order, exert and maintain political power, and privilege one category over the other (Peake and Kobayashi 1994). I understand the majority of debates regarding place, identity, ethnicity and gender to be structured by these sorts of concepts which reflect binary and oppositional thought.

Racial Refiguring: Developing “Un-natural” Discourses in Feminist Geography

2.1 INTRODUCTION

I said, “Papa says I’m not black or white anymore. He says there’s no such thing as race.” Cole shrugged. “He’s right, you know. About it all being constructed. But” - she turned to me, looking at me intently - that doesn’t mean it doesn’t exist.” (Birdie to Cole in Danzy Senna’s novel Caucasia)

In this chapter, I will explain how Cole’s seemingly paradoxical assertion continues to reverberate across the social landscape. To do so, I will firstly re-visit the key nineteenth century “scientific race” debates. Then I will offer a critical reappraisal of the “deconstructionist turn” and “discourse on difference” in order to develop a feminist geographical approach to this study of multiethnicity.

I begin with a section entitled “Replacing Race” where I attempt to reposition race by tracing its genealogy, illustrating how the work on “mixed race” echoes myths about racial purity. Secondly, I will explore the “deconstructionist turn” and the “discourses on difference”, which include literatures espousing the virtues of fragmented and multiple identities, cultural hybridity and spatial metaphors. I will briefly converse with cultural critics who are increasingly concerned with comprehending identity as neither fixed nor essentialized (Bhabha 1994; Gilroy 1993; Hall 1990). Without denying the importance of imagining identity as open rather than closed, I problematize these arguments through a discussion of the emerging debates in critical “mixed race” theory.

Finally, I propose a refashioned feminist geography agenda with an emphasis upon alliances rather than differences. While feminist geography has begun to integrate the voices of differently oppressed women (WGSF 1997), I would argue that we have not yet enabled the development of more complex questions about the spatial constituency of the processes of both gendered and racialized selves. This chapter sets the stage for future mappings of previously obfuscated

racialized and gendered landscapes of power towards developing an “un-natural” discourse¹ in feminist geography.

2.2 RE-PLACING RACE: TRACING THE GENEALOGIES OF RACE AND “MIXED RACE”²

In this section, I will review the history of nineteenth century “scientific racism” discourses by exploring select dialogues on race from the Enlightenment³ period onwards in order to explore how race has become such a salient social construct. I suggest that ideas from the Enlightenment have remained remarkably powerful in influencing subsequent ideas in the construction of racist social relations.

As Cole elucidates in the introduction quote, race continues to possess a very real social significance, despite the fact that it is a social invention. In order to understand how this has happened, Young (1995) insists that we look at race in a dynamic fashion, linking it to the social and historical processes taking place at particular times. Malik (1996) agrees, explaining that an understanding of race requires exploring how issues of humanity, society and nature are socially and historically constructed.⁴ Contemporary framings of race grew out of fundamental

¹Kobayashi and Peake (1994) define an “un-natural discourse” as a “discourse which develops, albeit uncomfortably, along lines that challenge categories so naturalized that they may not even be viewed as problematic” (Kobayashi and Peake 1994:238). These narratives would disrupt and deconstruct hegemonic enlightenment discourses by suggesting new and different discourses, where unnatural is read as “anything that falls outside of the parameters of the natural, safe and known world of rational man” (ibid:238). In other words, an unnaturalized discourse would provide a way to resist both sexism and racism.

²It is important to make a distinction between my use of the word “multiethnic” and the phrase “mixed race”. Most of the current work on multiethnicity among academics is framed under the rubric of “critical “mixed race” theory” which is a far more prevalent phrase than multiethnic in academic circles and the media. A mass of multiethnic students, faculty and staff personnel in higher education has allowed for a multiethnic studies field to emerge (Root 1996; Williams 1996). However, I continue to use “multiethnic” to describe participants in this study, for reasons explored in chapter one, “Contesting old categories - creating new cartographies”.

³ The Enlightenment period is characterized by seemingly scientific explanations which effectively naturalized both racist and sexist categories, based upon a desire for rationality, reason and scientific enquiry (Ifekwunigwe 1997b) exercised through a discourse which explicitly defined these characteristics racially (Goldberg 1992:557). The subsequent explorations based upon these tenets imposed logic and rationality largely through these dualistic and hierarchical terms.

⁴ Malik asserts that the social meaning of race emerges from the contradiction between the ideological commitment to equality and the persistence of inequality as a practical reality, echoing Omi and Winant’s definition of race through process (Omi and Winant 1994). Capitalism and its subsequent ideology, as embodied in the Enlightenment tradition, proclaim a belief in equality. But capitalism places limits upon a utopian fantasy of equality.

disruptions and discussions in nineteenth century racial theory, where racial difference was read solely in biological terms. As mentioned in chapter one, race has been recognized as a biological classification, used to rationalize human deprivation where physical differences (phenotypes) between groups of individuals were inextricably attached to particular cultural meanings, which were usually hierarchical, oppositional and oppressive. These myths were conspiratorially backed up by pseudo-scientific discourses of the Enlightenment period, bestowing dignity to the false divisions of race, thus contributing to the continuation of myths about racial hierarchies.

Influenced largely by the rediscovery of Mendelian genetics and the proliferation of ideas around genotype and phenotype progeny (including Darwin's work which explored the preservation of favoured races in the struggle for life), the Enlightenment period had a profound effect upon debates on race. Racial scientists of the eighteenth and nineteenth century believed that discrete races did exist, and were differentially ranked on the basis of their interrelatedness. The assumption that physical and mental characteristics were co-related, and that both are passed on from generation to generation by hereditary factors, proliferated.

These myths, and the collusion of scientific racism to back up their claims reflects how cultural and science work together as co-conspirators. Furthermore, they had very real social consequences, evident through the imposition of slavery and colonialism, and clearly marked by particular social movements: in the United States witnessed by the War of Independence in the 1700s and the French Revolution (Ifekwunigwe 1997b). It was the emergence of these debates which gave rise to the eugenics movement and various racial hygiene campaigns of the twentieth century which included selective breeding, forced sterilization, and extermination (Young 1995). Clearly, theories of race reflected beliefs in racial purity with attached cultural and hierarchical meanings. These claims about the absolute fixedness of the superiority of particular races were to have significant repercussions on the growing dialogue about people of multiethnicity.

Social differences have come to be seen as natural and rationalized through the discourse on race and have been attributed socially constructed, seemingly "natural" meanings.

Distinct categories of races had been firmly established, and were divided largely into categories of white and non-white (Root 1990). Those individuals who did not fit clearly within clearly marked racial boundaries disrupted the well-drawn borders by “illegally” crossing them.

The contestation of racial categories represents one of the most controversial forms of border crossing - a “transgression” (see Creswell 1996). Multiethnic individuals were seen as threatening because:

“white is considered superior to non-white: the privileges and power assumed by whites are desired by non-whites. It is from this assumption [that attempts were made] to prevent racial mixing because free interaction [assumed] equality” (Root 1990:187).

Despite the fact that whenever interracial sex emerged, it disrupted any possibility of the immutability of racial identity (Young 1995), multiethnic individuals were seen as crossing borders and the underlying and often blatant articulation of crossing over in mainstream society was represented through discourses of disease, contamination and imminent destruction, fuelled by the fear that something sacred, pure or powerful was in danger of losing its authenticity (Sibley 1995). As a result, the mere presence of multiethnic individuals in the landscape became criminalized. They directly challenged mainstream categories constructed precisely to police boundaries. Therefore, in order to make intelligible the individual who crossed racial lines, multiethnic individuals were positioned as being “out of place” and myths began to propagate around this notion.

I will now explore how that positioning has provided an insidious underpinning to the literature on “mixed race” identity from the nineteenth century discourse onwards. According to Nakashima (1992), early “mixed race” studies emphasized “hybrid degeneracy” - where multiethnic individuals were considered genetically inferior - and were characterized by a clear monoracial bias and consequently cast the “inbetween” status of multiethnic individuals as deviant. This stereotype flowered along with scientific research to support it around the end of the civil war, continuing throughout the mid-thirties, establishing itself firmly with the rediscovery of Mendelism in the early 1900s and the growth of the eugenics movement (Provine 1973). A few examples of these studies include the research of Samuel George Morton (1848) who argued that interracial breeding habits produced an offspring which was not successful. This

notion was echoed by French anthropologist Pierre Paul Broca, who insisted that the union of the "negro male" and "white woman" produced sterile offspring (Broca 1864 in Young 1995).

These claims continued to assert the seeming superiority of the white man and also justified at the time the lynching of black men. Edward Long contended that black and white people belonged to different species and that interracial children were infertile. He also claimed that black people were closer to apes than to man (Long 1772 in Tizard and Phoenix 1993). Long was extremely hostile toward multiethnic unions, claiming:

"in the course of a few generations more the English blood will be so contaminated with this mixture (of black and white) ...till the whole nation resembles the Portuguese and the Moriscos in complexion of skin and the baseness of mind" (Long in Walvin 1973:52).

These ideas continued to proliferate into the 1900s, when Charles Benedict Davenport cited as the leading advocate of eugenics in the United States at the time (Provine 1973) waxed poetic on the idea that multiethnic individuals suffered from emotional and mental problems:

"One often sees in mulattos⁵ an ambition and push combined with intellectual inadequacy which makes the unhappy hybrid dissatisfied with his lot and a nuisance to others" (Davenport 1917:365).

These sorts of conclusions reflected an insistence to cling to myths equating a particular superiority and racial purity, where culturally reductionist notions were seen as "natural" on the part of scientific inquiry, resulting in a discourse that was racist in both the treatment and the definition of its subjects. Castle (1926), Krauss (1941) and W.C. Smith (1939) described multiethnic people as having no strength of their senses - either physical, mental, emotional or moral - and this apparently led to early deaths and the inability to produce offspring. As well, this research on multiethnic people focused solely upon individuals of combined African and European descent - those groups with the largest difference in social status and privilege in

⁵ The term "mulatto" has a long and painful history. In critical race theory, the term is employed among some researchers as a subversive form of identification among those who are of varying fractions of African and European heritage (Root 1996:x). However, not all multiethnic people view this as a positive designation, as the term's original meaning has strongly negative connotations. Many people believe that the word is derived from the Spanish "mulato" meaning mule, or the infertile hybrid between a horse and a donkey, obviously suggesting an inferior status.

society. Early sociological theory proposed "marginal personality" disorder as a potential diagnosis toward multiethnic individuals (Stonequist 1937). Dover claimed that the multiethnic soul was an example of the "work of the devil, that they inherit the vices of both parents and the virtues of neither, that they are without exception infertile, unbalanced, indolent, immoral, and degenerate." (Dover 1937:279). In 1941, Krauss in the Journal of Heredity claimed that the multiethnic individual exhibited psychological and emotional problems stemming from their unnatural blend (Krauss 1941). This body of literature emphasized that the multiethnic soul was:

"moody, discontent, depressed, irrational, impulsive, fickle, criminal, chronically confused, emotionally unstable, constantly nervous, and ruled by their passions - all because of an internal disharmony between the genetically determined characters of their two parent races." (Krauss 1941:372)

Social scientists echoed these theories. Nakashima has demonstrated that sociologists like R. E. Park (1931) and W. C. Smith (1939) portrayed the multiethnic individual as:

"being unable to deal with their biculturality - their conflicting cultures left them torn and confused, and their non-acceptance by either or any racial group meant that they were pathetically marginal and outcast, left to be the target of both their parent groups' anger and hatred for one another" (Nakashima 1992:171).

Although I have focused upon the literature which has marked the multiethnic person as inferior to their monoracial counterparts, there were arguments which suggested the multiethnic individual as superior to monoracial individuals. Some claimed that those multiethnic individuals who were partially white were superior to those who were "full" black, "full" Indian or "full" Asian (see Castle 1926). Park (1931) claimed that people of African-European descent were genetically and culturally superior to blacks (yet at the same time, this group was seen as genetically and culturally inferior to whites). Guilick (1914) suggested that racial minorities ought to be assimilated so as to raise their position on the hierarchical scale. There was also a group of scientists who adopted a "survival of the fittest" mentality, claiming that multiethnic individuals inherited the best features of each parent and therefore were smarter, healthier and more attractive than monoracial individuals (Krauss 1941). However, the overall argument - connecting a particular superiority to a specific, socially constructed group based on phenotype - was not altered.

These sorts of studies, with their histories woven from biological determinism, reflected a particular dualism emphasizing either the superiority or inferiority of the multiethnic individual. Both representations tended to emphasize her deviant status. The wilder imaginings of fiction writers reinforced the pseudo-scientific themes, where multiethnic characters were envisaged as experiencing great torment because of their “genetically divided” selves, suffering from low self-esteem demonstrated most often through delinquent behaviour. These stereotypes were compounded by issues of gender, where multiethnic women in particular were seen as flighty and confused, indicative through mainstream fictional literature of the time which included multiethnic characters who were dangerous, tormented and pathetic, most often African-European or Latino-European (Berzon 1978). For example, novelist Elizabeth Croker penned the following about an African-European in her novel, Daughter of Strangers in 1950:

“The idea of the mixed river of her blood was whirling in her brain and in her troubled, uneasy frame of mind she had become a stranger to herself” (Croker 1950 in Berzon 1978:104).

Women of multiethnicity were envisioned, even more than multiethnic men, as unreliable sorts, liable to revert to the savage, primitive behaviour of the jungle (Tizard and Phoenix 1993:20). At the same time, the multiethnic person could be seen as a straightforward villain, evil incarnate, combining the worst traits of both races (Berzon 1978). In Paris' 1921 novel, Kimono, yet another attempt to classify the multiethnic individual as confused reveals itself in the description of an Asian-European:

“A butterfly body with this cosmic war shaking it incessantly. Poor child! No wonder she seems always tired” (Paris 1921:87).

Clearly, representations of the multiethnic woman presented her as a tragic figure, struggling between the strands of her ancestry. This conflict was deemed a “clash of blood” (Berzon 1978 in Tizard and Phoenix 1993). British novelists of the 1800s were fascinated with the image of the “mulatto” West Indian heiress who was most often targeted as a character who provided comic relief (see Jane Austen's Sanditon (1817) and Thackeray's Vanity Fair (1848)).

To summarize, the social project of the Enlightenment dealt with the multiethnic individual in very particular ways in order to make intelligible the body of the multiethnic person, through a series of interwoven discourses that naturalized racist categories through "racial science." I have briefly endeavoured to demonstrate how writers and scientists during that time imposed further dis-order upon the multiethnic individual. These categories are more than simply a means of imposing intellectual hierarchies. They also exert and maintain political power and involve the privileging of particular patriarchal discourses.

I have limited my evaluation to those clinical and literary examples through from the nineteenth century to the early 1900s. However, remnants of the hybrid degeneracy theory continue to spill into the more recent clinical psychology evaluations of multiethnic identity. Writing in the late 1950s, the psychologist Erikson claimed that the identity process is challenging to multiethnic people (Erikson 1959). According to several clinical psychological investigations, the multiethnic individual apparently suffers considerable confusion and anxiety toward identity development (Gibbs 1987). Several case studies of biracial individuals have concluded that they are troubled by their status and confused about their identities, and that they experience more difficulties with families and peers than others, emphasizing that biracial people are poorly adjusted (Gibbs Huang and Associates 1989). Some studies went so far as to insist that it is impossible to create a positive multiethnic identity:

"I believe one cannot develop a biracial identity if he/she tries to pass for white, because this requires letting go of one's biracial identity. I do not think it is possible to develop a "mixed race" or a White or Black identity at the same time, because I don't see how a dual identity process can occur...it is not possible to develop a positive "mixed-race" identity by evolving the Black and White aspects simultaneously. I do not think it is possible to have an identity on a psychosocial foundation that is at odds with itself" (Carter 1995:119).

Carter concludes by suggesting that a biracial person ought to become grounded in the "devalued" racial group as a foundation for facilitating the merger of the two racial groups (Carter 1995:120). Thus, even clinical psychologists continued to reassert particular claims about biological determinism. Identity is seen as bounded, static and fixed. There is no attempt within these studies to reconcile the solitudes of the multiethnic person's experience, clearly

illustrated through the use of phrases like "bi-racial" and "dual identity." The multiethnic individual is compared to those with supposedly "stable" identities - for example, those who are "pure" black or white, as if anyone is pure blooded. These linear representations depend, or rely, upon racial classification as a way of making sense of the multiethnic individual. The research seems to insist that the individual chooses one particular identity rather than multiple, thereby implying that the monoracial individual by contrast relies upon only one identification. This sort of premise dictates the (un)reality that it is impossible to identify with both races implicitly (Root 1992).

I explained earlier that this thesis would draw from Bondi's assertion that a politics of identity is inextricably linked to a politics of location. To illustrate this claim, I wish to point out that there has been great variability in the way in which the multiethnic person has been represented across historical and geographical contexts. Stonequist (1937) has explained how the status of a particular "mixed race" group can be taken as an indication of the larger racial problems in specific places. South Africa provides a cogent example, where apartheid has relegated a particular multiethnic community (the "Coloureds") to an intermediate identity separate, yet significantly subordinate to the white population (Daniel 1996).

Western (1981) has demonstrated that the "Coloureds" challenge the unproblematic idea of racial blackness and represent an intermediate "buffer" group between two racialized entities. Seen as neither black nor white yet both, the "Coloured" population "through their slavery and subsequent dependence...took on a culture that in nearly all respects is the same as that of White South Africans" (Western 1981:12). At the same time, however, "Coloured" people customarily receive lower wages than whites and their seeming "moral worthlessness" is continually asserted (ibid:15). Although the one-drop rule dictates that the multiethnic individual must occupy the same position as the lower-status parent, in some cases, their status is negotiated on the basis of historical and geographical circumstances. Among the "mulattos" in Haiti and "mestizos" in Mexico, for example, the multiethnic individual can achieve a higher social standing than either parent (see Davis 1991; Goldberg 1995; Stoler 1995). These differences are in part a result of various colonial encounters between Europeans and Indigenous populations in different countries. For example, the "Metis" population in Canada was the result of the interaction

between the Canadian First Nations peoples and the European settlers in the Western provinces of Canada in the late 1800s. Despised and rejected by the First Nations tribes, and also by the British and French populations, the "Metis" were relegated to a wholly isolated outcast status (Davis 1991). Ng (1993) has documented how Spanish and Portuguese sovereigns persisted in intermixing with the Native populations of the "New World," even when these liaisons were not legitimized by the Roman Catholic authorities as legitimate union. However, despite these examples, the multiethnic person continues to remain stigmatized and positioned as "out of place" in the majority of cases.

These oppressive representations have made for tragic repercussions among multiethnic individuals. Some examples of this impact have been documented largely through the literatures on "passing" where certain multiethnic people, if their phenotype allows for it, can choose to veil their non-white identity in order to escape prosecution and emotional pain (see Sollors 1997; Senna 1998; McBride 1996). Joel Williamson describes passing as "crossing the race line and winning acceptance as white in the white world" (Williamson 1980:100). Often passing as white was seen as the only way to gain access to a variety of privileges and opportunities (Streeter 1996). Many Hollywood films have capitalized upon the portrayal of the multiethnic woman's tentative attempts to pass because it made for titillating entertainment (Giles 1995). These films climaxed in her eventual traumatic "outing" by some sinister source, leaving her colleagues and friends horrified, and the multiethnic person devastated, scarred and mortified for life (Jones 1994).

The passing narrative has become one of the key discourses in critical "mixed race" theory partly because it demonstrates the disastrous impact these negative portrayals have had upon the multiethnic individual. It indicates how far the multiethnic person would go in order to deny his/her heritage to "make it" in the white world. Although many have prolifically and discussed the multiethnic individual's often painful attempt to pass (see Sollors 1997) I will not document those examples here. This thesis will concern itself instead with developing an alternative to this prevailing discourse. It will do so by contrasting the oppressive passing narrative with more emancipatory readings of the experience of multiethnicity based upon interviews.

The passing narrative reflects a reading of the multiethnic person as nervous and terrified, anxious to enter the white world at any cost. This is further compounded by the issue of gender, where women of multiethnicity who attempt to pass are further marked as deceptive. In later chapters, I will develop this argument by contrasting this portrayal with the notion of “trickster.” In comparison, the “trickster” re-presents the multiethnic individual as imaginative and innovative, playing with camouflage and agency in an ultimately productive way without living in mortal fear of being “outed.” I will explicate the notion of “trickster” more fully in chapter seven.

I have shown, by briefly drawing from key genealogies of race and “mixed race” through history, how biological determinism lent credence to the development of ideas about “scientific racism” over the seventeenth to the nineteenth century. In the next section, I will demonstrate how this racism bled into and permeated a vast range of pedagogical and cultural pursuits late into the twenty-first century, including the discipline of geography, which has focused upon static categorization and movement of particular groups in certain locales. I will now look at the empirical analyses pursued in both race and geography, and feminism and geography.

2.3 GEOGRAPHY AND RACE

Since geography's earliest involvement in the scientific classification of the world through cartography, geography has had a racist role (Kobayashi and Peake 1994). I have previously indicated that during the nineteenth century, the ground was fertile for projects of biological determinism. Several cultural geographers (Driver 1992; Domosh 1991) have explored and critiqued the ways in which pre-war geography reflected this legacy of racist assumptions. However, racist prejudices in geography continued to make their presence felt in the post-war period (Bonnett 1996a).

Characterized by a reliance upon quantitative methodologies, geographical studies on race was concerned with the acquisition of sets of ethnic data and represented a reformulation of seemingly objectification, reifications and assumptions about ethnic divides (for example, see Peach 1975). Ethnicity was clearly quantifiable in that geographers literally and metaphorically mapped physical boundaries that separated and excluded the world of privilege from the “world

of the ethnic", along racial lines (Kobayashi and Peake 1994). Largely influenced by the Chicago school, much of the work of this time traced the movement and behaviour of those deemed non-white with a particular emphasis upon the spatial separation between non-white/white.

These postwar empirical and traditional approaches to studies of race in geography achieved a widespread popularity. However, they lacked theoretical sophistication, revealing some very simplistic, binary conclusions which are suggested by Peach's assertion regarding the spatial distributions of groups and their social distance from one another (Peach 1975). They also reflected the influence of imperialism and colonialism in both their approach and method, regarding ethnicity as largely unproblematic. Making the assumption that ethnicity has an obvious and simplistic relationship with "genetic stock," it locks race into particular places and objectifies disturbing racial social constructions.

Later studies on race in geography continued to rely largely upon a rationalist or empirical perspective, addressing the spatial decisions made by particular ethnic groups in the context of race issues. Jackson and Smith (1981), Clarke, Ley and Peach (1984) and Ley (1984) continued to follow the empirical tradition, as their work included statistical based studies of interracial "conflict" and subsequent "accommodation". However, these geographers did begin to trace various ethnic groups' attitudes toward residential segregation by emphasizing the ways individuals respond to geographical contexts.

The geographical analyses on race of the time reflected the influential contribution of Frederik Barth who offered an important contribution to the existing studies on ethnicity in 1969 by arguing that the fundamental process in ethnic group formation is boundary construction. The insistence that the content of ethnic identity - "the cultural stuff [boundaries] enclose" (Barth 1969:15) is less important than the actual boundary itself - led to a flurry of texts which tended to disregard the content of ethnic identities altogether (Royce 1982). Soon enough, studies examining the logic and process of boundary construction flourished. Cornell (1996) points out different lines of inquiry (see Steinberg 1981; Nagel 1994; Espiritu 1992) which characterized most analyses of ethnicity after Barth's central contribution. These studies examined the

motivations for the construction of ethnic boundaries. Most concluded that ethnic groups were generally products of shared material interests, themselves products of particular historical trajectories and contexts, where ethnic identity "is essentially hostage to material conditions" (Cornell 1996:266). Ethnicity, therefore, was generally determined as highly situational and contextual, viewed through a prism of more "fundamental forces" with a focus upon the dimension of class, which in turn was shaped the way individuals perceived their own ethnic identity and consequently those claims they made about their ethnicity, echoing Omi and Winant's (1994) definition of race.

Cultural geographer Peter Jackson has made significant interventions in the arena of race and geography. In his critique of early empirical analyses in geography, Jackson claims that these approaches fail to recognize that questions about ethnicity involve social relations in which differentials of power are central. Jackson (1989) introduced a political slant to the discussion on race and place by employing concepts of ideology, hegemony and resistance, in part influenced by the turn racial studies had taken with the work of Barth. Concerned with the ways in which class and race issues intersect in the competition for scarce resources, Jackson illustrated how dominant ideologies are contested through unequal relations of power. Calling for a clarification of the role of race in the broader processes of economic and social restructuring, Jackson was one of the first geographers to contemplate ethnicity as a kind of political or cultural strategy.

Jackson's 1987 edited Race and Racism was influenced by various interdisciplinary studies on race and was characterized by an adamant disassociation from the empirical models, favouring an emphasis upon the description of the spatial behaviour mostly decreed as segregation of minority groups, describing the spatial patterns of minorities. However, as Bonnett (1996a) points out, analyses which focused on racial segregation almost seemed to apologize for it. The concept of race was still employed as the key analytical tool and explanatory determinant, and it was still largely assumed that the existence of different races in space gave rise to conflict (ibid). Later research projects on race moved away from an interest in patterns of immigration, segregation, integration and assimilation toward inquiries which examined how places are assigned racial meaning (Penrose 1993; Keith 1989; Jacobs 1988). These works examined areas

of cities or how national/international categories have been developed and invented through racialized interpretations, accentuating racism and its geographical ramifications (Anderson 1996). It should be noted that geographical studies on race were inextricably informed by the changing nature of human geography of the time with its emphasis upon place as a dynamic for humanistic experiential analysis. However, they remained theoretically naive and racially essentialist in their formulations (Bonnett 1996a). The racial studies of the time continued to grant ethnic identity very little meaning outside that derived from convenience (Cornell 1996) and ignored the very real cyclical process of identity formation. While there was a focus upon the use of cultural resources by ethnic groups, the particular agency employed by these groups was seen to be driven largely by factors external to the group itself. Framed by a certain set of assumptions about the causes of visible minority agency and restraint, and the subsequent spatial consequences of those choices, racial identity was reified and racialization as a process remained absent from these debates. The production of racial meanings over space and time were largely ignored. In order to address this chasm, cultural geographers Jackson and Penrose (1993) adopted a poststructural stance to race and geography by applauding the crumbling of seeming natural categories. Interrogating the formation of sociospatial meaning, their edited work Race, Place and Nation infers that race as a social construction reflects an insidious ideology. As geographers, they trace the specific constitution of racism and its variable effects in particular historical and geographical circumstances. Some other important analyses included the work of Knopp who focused on the relations between race, sexuality and class by identifying the construction of a gay identity in the gentrification of an area of New Orleans as a predominantly white, male, middle-class phenomenon (Knopp 1990); while D. Rose (1990) explained how immigrant women living in two gentrifying neighbourhoods in Montreal had less access to after-school child care service than non-immigrant women.

However, as is obvious from the last two examples, these studies continue to maintain a marked divide between nonwhite/white and ethnicity and race are conflated, both envisioned as a characteristic applied to a group of individuals. While the collective properties of a particular group and their subsequent acts of resistance have been explored, there very rarely seems to be a recognition that an individual can be part of more than one ethnicity and therefore affiliated to more than one group. I would also argue that most of the studies about race in geography

have remained relatively quiet about the tensions which emerge among and within particular individuals regarding their ethnic options (Waters 1990). Although geographers continue to emphasize the reality that race is a social construction, we have yet to unravel the complex ways that racialization is socially constructed in places. Part of our project ought to include a more critically reflexive analyses of these political categories.

To conclude this section, geographers working on issues of race seem concerned with mapping out the spatial patterns of particular ethnic groups or the interactions among white and non-white groups rather than exploring the complex processes of racialization taking place in particular spaces. As Kobayashi and Peake point out, racist prejudices continued to reflect the work in the discipline, where "cultural geographers continue to map the world along lines that perpetuate notions of racial difference and, implicitly or explicitly, racial hierarchy" (Kobayashi and Peake 1994:226).

Gender is also conspicuously absent from these debates on race in geography. While attention was placed upon the dimensions of race and class as inextricably intertwined, (Jackson 1989) the idea of gender and race as co-constructed was not discussed in great detail. I now turn towards an exploration of the early forays in feminist geography in order to address this disquieting absence.

2.4 FEMINISM AND GEOGRAPHY

Feminist geography followed a similar (but not identical) trajectory as the work on race in geography. The initial feminist critique in geography stemmed from the dissatisfaction with the absence of womens' voices in the discipline. The purpose of feminist geography was to unveil women's exclusion from the field as well as to challenge the very nature and body of knowledge that is academic geography (McDowell 1993a). Women in geography began to explore the analysis of gender differences in spatial behaviour and activity patterns, bolstered by the emergence of feminist theory as a disciplinary location in academe. This led to the development of critical studies which focused on spatial choices and the behaviour of individual female actors plotting out a geographic landscape which was seemingly rendered ungendered by the analyses in the past (see Hanson and Pratt 1988; Seager and Olson 1986; Hanson and Monk 1982;

McDowell 1979). These feminist rationalist approaches of the 1970s and 1980s, firmly located within the modernist tradition, focused upon spatial differences in women's status in comparison to men. They argued that the association between women, home, consumption and the private sphere were ideological constructs rather than empirical descriptions by concentrating upon the spatial and gendered division in the workplace, at home and in the urban environment, effectively challenging the public/private dichotomy (McDowell 1993a).

Although these empirical studies were marked by an enormous confidence about its purpose, namely, mapping out women's exclusion in geography and exploring the variation of women's lives from men, they were not largely self conscious about differences between women. Gender was regarded as a coherent variable, and this underpinning echoed the tenets of liberal feminism where developing equal rights with men set the primary agenda. The studies ignored how power and authority are themselves infused with masculinity, and therefore failed to comprehensively challenge the basis upon which gender inequalities are legitimated. They also took for granted women's joint project of challenging male dominance by embracing a totalizing tendency to position differences among women of lesser importance in the name of the "bigger cause." Thus, the early work of feminist geographers was marked by rich empirical detail - but unfortunately not equalled by any real theoretical finesse. Although being sensitive to some differences, these studies (Katz and Monk 1993; Mackenzie 1989; Norwood and Monk 1987) still took for granted the salience of gender as an self-evident analytical category. Current debates in feminist geography owe a great deal to these early approaches, as they firmly succeeded in placing gender on the geographical agenda. While productive, however, they glossed over questions regarding the importance of ethnic differences among women almost completely and insisted on treating a series of complex interrelationships in terms of the man/woman binary primarily (Kobayashi and Peake 1994). Gender was addressed primarily in relation to class, often presuming an unraced subject (Sanders 1990)⁶. Feminist geographers began to question whether gender was a key social division, asking if it was as relevant to geographical analyses as class and race. They queried previous assumptions about the common

⁶ Perhaps this emphasis upon the dimension of class is not surprising, given that many feminist geographers, particularly in the UK, were working within a socialist feminist framework (McDowell 1993a, Massey 1992).

experiences of women and the theoretical underpinnings regarding the universality of women's oppression (McDowell 1993a).⁷

A historical shift in the academy took place when a critique of objectivity was mounted in many disciplines. The emergence of postmodern and poststructuralist debates, postcolonialism, and the women of colour critique recognized that all scholarship is embedded in particular histories of knowledge and power. Engagement with these ideas has expanded disciplinary boundaries and offer substantive and powerful critiques to the previous debates. These contemporary disruptions were to have a significant impact upon the discipline of geography as well. Feminist geographers in particular were drawn to poststructuralism primarily because it provided a way to deconstruct dualisms (Bondi 1993; McDowell 1991). The deconstructionist perspective in feminist debates critically scrutinized the categories of man/woman while showing how apparently fixed and normative categories are used to organize cultural understandings of sexual difference, as well as exploring how these categories themselves are defined in particular contexts for particular purposes and open to change (Kobayashi and Peake 1994).

However, many feminist geographers argue that poststructuralist approaches retain a patriarchal and androcentric viewpoint, accomplishing very little in terms of changing the material, day-to-day conditions of marginalized groups (Kobayashi and Peake 1994; Bondi 1990). While acknowledging its limitations, it is important to note that poststructuralism challenged the prevalence of dualistic thinking in geography through which the validity and authority of particular masculinist discourses in the discipline were established. This subsequently encouraged feminist geographers to adopt the deconstructionist tendency to contest binary

⁷ I am obviously glossing over a number of useful contributions on gender issues in urban and social geography, which include studies on housing policy, safety and access (see Lauria and Knopp 1985), women's fear in public spaces (Pain 1991) and men's differential control over private and public space (Valentine 1989; Valentine 1990). I have also neglected, due to space constraints, the burgeoning literature about residential patterns among differential groups of women as well as literature exploring women's environmental perceptions and preferences (see Dyck 1989; MacKenzie 1989; Hanson and Hanson 1980). For a more comprehensive review of the work on women in geography over the last few decades, I refer the reader to McDowell's review of space, place and gender relations (McDowell 1993a and McDowell 1993b) and Rose (1993a) as well as the forthcoming anniversary issue of *Gender, Place and Culture* (1999).

representations and look closer at the institutional production of feminist geographical knowledge (Pratt 1993).

Shifting away from positivist philosophies towards a wider acceptance of ideas developed in cultural studies, and faced with hard questions about how to rework and reduce theory, feminist geographers began to question the analytical category of “woman.” This period was characterized by moves to deconstruct previously taken-for-granted categories and attempts to theorize differences among women - for example, McDowell’s call to scrutinize ethnocentric categories and incorporate a greater sensitivity to differences among women (1991) and Penrose et al. (1992) who turned to questions about representations and meaning; pointing out how feminist geography has become such a diverse and pluralistic enterprise that it is becoming inaccurate to define feminism as a single perspective.

These works were markedly different from the feminist empirical analyses of the past. While the proliferation of patriarchy continued to be acknowledged, there was a renewed celebration of differences among women (influenced in part by the critique offered by women of colour) where gender discrimination was not only read as unfair, but attempts were made to reverse the traditional superiority to all that is masculine. Visions of equality were seen as skewed because it reflected a gendered, masculinist version that denied differences between men and women.

Gillian Rose’s path-breaking text *Feminism and Geography* (1993a) developed those ideas through a critique of geographical knowledge. Making explicit some of geography’s inherently fraudulent, universalizing claims by insisting upon its masculinist nature, Rose exposed the androcentric nature of geographic narratives in her claims that feminism is already caught up in masculinist discourses of meaning and subjectivity. She reveals the ways in which male geographers have constructed a geography in which particularly masculinist ways of thinking are regarded as legitimate. Drawing upon a variety of theoretical insights from feminists working in poststructuralism and psychoanalysis, Rose unveils the masculinist discourses in geography by discussing two particular strands: the social scientific, which lays claims to rational and objective truths; and the aesthetic, which feminizes places and landscapes. By addressing the ways in which cultural geographers’ work on landscape embodies masculinist perspectives, Rose

effectively demonstrates how womens' understandings and experiences in places has been marginalized.

Rose's key contribution to feminist geography echoed many arguments made by feminist geographers like Penrose et al. (1992) and Bondi and Domosh (1992) by insisting that the geographical imagination has produced a exclusionary field of knowledge. Her work set off a series of analyses in feminist geography, where others began to draw upon qualitative and ethnographic methods in their quest to pay greater attention to everyday social relations and discursive strategies, exploring issues of sexuality and gender (see Cream 1995; Bell et al. 1994; Domosh 1991; Anderson 1991).

However, the growing skepticism about the legitimacy of gender as an analytical category led feminists to query the validity of the feminist project. Some feminist geographers asked whether or not this flurry of deconstruction had led to a crumbling of common goals (Bondi and Domosh 1992), emphasizing that once categories had been dismantled, it became increasingly more difficult to speak on their behalf. While feminists were concerned with deconstructing previously taken-for-granted categories and challenging fixed and oppositional dualisms, it did not necessarily follow that power was destabilized in the process, nor were differences among women sufficiently addressed. Finally, many feminists watched with anxiety as analyses associated with the deconstructionist turn became "playful intellectual exercises strangely remote from the realities of women's oppression" (Johnson 1994:109), reflecting the intrinsically patriarchal seductiveness of the deconstructionist turn (Bondi 1990).

Much like poststructuralism, the debates among women of colour also significantly challenged ethnocentric notions inherent in theoretical debates in feminist geography. However, it is particularly revealing that despite this emphasis on differences among women, very few feminist geographers writing at this time were either women of colour, nor were there many feminist geographers writing about women of colour (Kobayashi 1994). While writers like Rose (1993a) undertook the difficult challenge to discuss the exclusionary nature of geography as a discipline to women and incorporated many of the arguments developed by women of colour (see Rose's final chapter in 1993a) few have yet been courageous enough to discuss how the

discipline might be exclusionary to women of colour (although see Sanders 1990). The empirical understandings of the experiences of racialized women were often limited to those from those working in development studies and geography (see Lawson 1995) and their concerns were primarily interwoven with nation and colonialism (Pratt 1992; Domosh 1991).

Women of colour made an invaluable contribution to feminist theory by challenging the extent to which feminist thinking has largely evolved from a white, middle-class perspective (Rose 1993a). However, the consequences of this style of critique have been largely divisive (Bondi 1993) leading to “painful fragmentation among feminists...along every possible fault line” (Haraway in Bondi 1993:93). Many white, middle-class feminist geographers began to examine how their own privilege via race and class was complicit in various forms of oppression among women (McDowell 1993b). The stories emerging from women of colour were rightly celebrated and crucial in challenging dominant perceptions of womanhood. However, they also authenticated particular kinds of knowledge based upon experience. While such interventions have become an integral part of a significant conceptual advance in academe, revealing that oppositional stances are rife with complexity, I argue that their work does not spotlight the contradictions and tensions that animate such positions.

Although I unequivocally recognize the striking paucity of research on the experiences of women of colour (Kobayashi and Peake 1994), an exaggerated focus upon categories like race can invoke a conception of identity as something “uncovered rather than constructed...something fixed rather than changing” (Bondi 1993:93), as if the dimension of “colour” is a natural axis for analysis. I suggest that women of colour hierarchically privilege claims about personal identity based upon individual family histories (Zack 1995) which eclipses woman of colour Audre Lorde’s assertion that it is not what we are made of, but what we make of ourselves (Lorde 1984 and see Bourne 1987).

Secondly, as I have previously argued (Mahtani 1994) the category of “woman of colour” tends to encourage debates which polarize particular representations of oppression. If oppression is discussed, more often than not it is in relation to the “doubled oppression” of women of colour (Barrath 1995; Mahtani 1994). Despite the call for explorations which would take into

consideration multiple power dynamics, the dimension of oppression in feminist analyses remained largely discussed within a binary framework as McDowell puts it succinctly:

“the argument ran, working class women were more oppressed than middle class women, women of colour than white women etc.” (McDowell 1993b:309).

While many women of colour demonstrated how they countered oppressive racist constraints, few women of colour chose to discuss the ways they also experienced various sorts of privilege by virtue of their ethnic difference, an examination which would make a valuable contribution to poststructuralist attempts to disrupt binary conceptualizations of power. I am often left wondering as I explore these academic writings whether or not theorists actually consider how the contestation of some social forces may in fact reinscribe others at the same time. Indeed, few scholars have examined how women occupy multiple spaces of privilege via class while simultaneously occupying oppressed gendered and racialized positions (Domosh 1997).

Recognizing aspects of ourselves which give us privilege and shape various sorts of geographies is an enormously difficult task as Johnson points out (Johnson 1994). However, taking the risk to explore these kinds of forays would effectively complicate binary conceptualizations of women of colour as either victimized or powerless, a representation which further reproduces particularly derogative and often passive cultural meanings associated with women of colour, while locating them within complicated and complex mappings of power relations.

Finally, while the women of colour critique led to a flurry of feminist geographers encouraging discussion and dialogue on differences and diversity among women (Penrose et al. 1992) few were entirely sure how to go about exploring alliances across differences in the empirical realm. How could feminist geographers of colour and white, middle-class feminists work together, for example? This desire to forge alliances across racialized boundaries in the name of a feminist project remains a challenging endeavour in feminist geography (WGSG 1997).

To conclude, then, geographers have attempted to expose the inadequacies of the cultural hierarchy and oppositional categories that form the core of western intellectual thought

(Kobayashi and Peake 1994; Rose 1993a, Hanson 1992; Bondi and Domosh 1992; Bondi 1992). However, while feminist geographers worked hard to deconstruct gender categories, very few feminist analyses have adopted a deconstructionist approach towards the racialization process. Secondly, it has become increasingly difficult to talk about a "feminist" project when the very category of "woman" has come under political scrutiny. While it was acknowledged that there were a myriad of differences among women, it remains a challenging enterprise to discuss how some differences might be more salient than others in particular places. Thirdly, while there has been an increased emphasis upon the deconstruction of analytical categories (like woman), it did not necessarily follow that power dynamics, and subsequently the conditions of marginalized groups such as women and racialized individuals would shift greatly as a result of theoretical deconstruction (Bondi 1990). When power was discussed, it remained largely conceptualized within a binary framework where some (the oppressors) had some and others (the oppressed) did not (although see Anderson 1996). In other words, geographers saw the need to move beyond the recognition that race and gender are social constructions, involving the expression of dominant ideologies. Geographers were faced with the challenge of moving beyond this position into new spaces "without lapsing into essentialism or retreating to universalist arguments that re-cast marginalized groups within overarching structures" (Kobayashi and Peake 1994:230). Several strands of thought emerged from these exasperating discussions - namely, the discourse on difference which I will now explore in greater detail.

2.5 THE DISCOURSE ON DIFFERENCE

"Celebrate Bakhtin, but run like hell when you see a couple of kids walking towards you down the road" (Keith 1992:563).

In the search for a theory which allowed for a way to think about pluralities and diversities rather than universality and unity, the discourse on difference evolved in the social sciences. The discourse on difference is reflected through discussions of fractured and fragmented identities, a celebration of cultural hybridity, and an explosion of spatial metaphors, like margin, centre, boundaries and frames, where we witness delightful new possibilities for cultural identities and formations, celebrated as "powerfully subversive, yet theorized as pervasive and commonplace" (Werbner and Modood 1997:1). I want to mark the very real danger of celebrating differences, as I am concerned with the proliferation of new texts which revere the dawning of a new era of

happy humanism associated with the discourse on difference. I will propose that the discourse on difference has paralysed social theorists in their attempts to adequately theorize about differences and diversity, effectively sanitized racism, and temporarily crippled feminist theory which began to vacillate wildly over how to analyse the relationships between multiple axes of oppression. It therefore becomes critical to develop sharp analyses of relationships among subjectivities, power, and specific relationships of subordination and resistance, where we ask how we might conceptualize the ways individuals simultaneously hold the paradoxical stance of both oppressor and oppressed in various places. I will now cite the major tenets of the discourse on difference and explore my critique in greater detail.

Fractured and fragmented identities The term "identity" can often imply a fixity, a given set of characteristics doled out to an individual at birth, relentlessly marked and immutable, inferring a coherent sense of self. This conception of identity has undergone a particular political shift, moving away from a belief in a core or essential self, towards considering the idea of complex and multiple identities. The emerging literature on the fragmentation of identities emerged from debates about identity politics (Fuss 1989). The recognition by marginalized and negated groups of the repression of their experiences and differences has led to the regrouping of political movements to reflect notions of identity. An identity politics is seen to provide a greater accountability by reflecting upon the position from which one interacts and by recognising the importance of questions concerning representation. Throughout the 1980s, a progressive fragmentation of political movements reflected the recognition that the operation of power in creating structures of domination and oppression were not restricted to a simple, single axis. A person's identity was more than simply "woman" or "gay male". Identities were seen to be shaped by a number of connecting and complex inter-related aspects, emphasizing that:

"Identification [is] a construction, a process never completed, always "in process". It is not determined in the sense that it can always be "won" or "lost", sustained or abandoned" (Hall 1996:2).

One of the key theorists on identity, Stuart Hall, is concerned with the critical anti-essential evaluation of the notion of an integral and unified identity. Drawing liberally from feminist

theory and cultural studies, identity is seen as a social-historical-political construction, always in process. Identities are always negotiated, rarely stable. "[Identity] is not an essence, but a positioning...a politics of position" says Hall (Hall 1996:120). Furthermore, identities are rarely unified but are often fractured and fragmented, continually in process of transforming (Rutherford 1990; Ferguson *et al.* 1990). Cultural theorists replaced notions of the "subject" with the new model of decentred, partial and fractured identities which were forged upon the continually shifting ground of emerging and dissolving differences. I suggest that the literature on fragmented and fractured identities depoliticizes issues of race and romanticizes difference. While it acknowledges the important point that identities are relational, identity becomes a continual interplay of potential transformations and flavours of the day - a colourful postmodern party which envisions culture as a free-floating entity, its boundaries infinitely porous. It obscures power relations and the continued hegemony of the centre over the margins (Lavie and Swedenburg 1996). Secondly, with its focus on the term "identity", the debates about fractured and fragmented identities rely on the notion to make arguments about the conceptualization of self. The very term encourages a psychological perspective rather than an emphasis upon the social, and disregards the very real impact of social relations within particular places upon an individual's development. In these circumstances, identity becomes something solid: an object to be displayed or possessed, revealing a deep desire for a solidarity which is fixed and mechanical, unveiling an excessive preoccupation with "sameness".

I think there are ways to talk about the multiple complex threads which make up the ways we think about our selves without necessarily going through the individual. Instead, I would argue that both gender and race must be represented as processes that proceed through experience⁸ (Probyn 1993:3). Barthes emphasizes, "the self is experienced only in an activity of production...it cannot stop...its constitutive movement is that of cutting across" (1977:157).

Identity as a term is useful because it can temporarily stabilize performances, but it still tells a "fixed" story. We have relationships in space and make continual choices about our own

⁸ However, I admit that experience is a highly contested term. I borrow from Bondi who insists that the essence of experience "resides not in its authenticity but in its ability to inform our ideas and actions" (Bondi 1993:95).

movement within those relationships. These decisions are reflected in our interactions with others. The term identity does not encapsulate movement within spaces, nor does it reflect the dynamic character of connections across borders. As I will argue in the thesis, the notion of alliances encourages a complex theorization of connections and more accurately reflects the agency we invoke when we forge alliances with particular collectives. Many authors have connected this emphasis upon fractured and multiple identities with a crisis of alienation and despair, where the dissolving of a particular conjunction of politics, culture and economics has controlled modern Western civilization (Bounds 1997). It is a given that the breadth and depth of capitalism has created distinct pockets of fragmentation and alienation where it has become increasingly difficult to carve out stable identities. As Ignatieff (1996) points out, it is not the deconstructionist nature of theory which is disturbing, as there are particular socio-political-historical reasons for the emergence of these paradigms, namely the decay of the solidarities of class and the nation-state. What is of concern about the discourse on difference is the presumption that links between groups is impossible:

“What is denied in the self-righteous autism of identity politics is the idea of *empathy*: for example, that women can enter into and experience some...aspects of a man's experience” (emphasis mine, Ignatieff 1996:48).

hooks, in her analysis of the merits of postmodernism, also emphasizes the need for alliances during an era marked by contemporary disruptions:

“The overall impact of postmodernism is that many other groups now share with black folks a sense of deep alienation, despair, uncertainty, loss of a sense of grounding, even if it is not informed by shared experience. Radical postmodernism calls attention to those shared sensibilities which cross the boundaries of race, class, gender., that could be fertile ground for the construction of *empathy* - ties that would promote recognition of common commitments, and serve as a base for solidarity and coalition” (emphasis mine, hooks 1990:27).

However, although Ignatieff and hooks both point to a renewed desire to discuss empathy and alliances, solidarity as a concept is largely ignored in discourses on difference. Probyn (1993) points out wryly how the tone of the Rutherford seminal text (1990) is:

"one of agonistics...and bloody...among the many targets, the left and white feminism are trounced for having erected a hierarchy of difference" (Probyn 1993:9). Identity ironically emerges "as an articulation of a rather static and rhetorical use of difference" (ibid:9).

Indeed, Probyn goes so far as to compare the debates to a "rather vicious game of issues and individuals elbowing each other out of the way, each crying out, "Listen to me, hear my difference!" (ibid:9). In other words, the discourses on difference often ignore notions of creative affiliation and the possibility of subjects as fragments of various collectivities. As Trinh (1989) emphasizes, the necessity for new alliances is imperative. The focus upon fragmentation does not provide the most constructive influence to feminist geography and tends to promote further separations and dualisms, much like cultural hybridity.

Cultural hybridity In a progressive attempt to explore potential sites of resistance to dominant hegemonies of race and nation, some cultural theorists have developed notions of inbetweenness and ambivalence through discussions of "cultural hybridity" (Mitchell 1997). Cultural hybridity, a "construct with the hegemonic power relation built into its process of constant fragmented articulation" (Lavie and Swedenburg 1996:10) focuses upon the process of fusion and intermingling, "involving the creation of a new form, which can then be set against the old form, of which it is partly made up" (Young 1995:25). To make my arguments about hybridity, I draw largely from the work of Homi Bhabha (1994; 1990). Bhabha's account of hybridity as a restless, uneasy, interstitial, radical heterogeneity focuses upon discontinuity and the revolution of multiple forms. For Bhabha, hybridity is "the process [which] gives rise to something different, something new and unrecognizable, a new area of negotiation of meaning and representation" (Bhabha 1990:211). Bhabha attempts to disrupt the authoritative representations of imperialist power through his notion of double displacement, which embodies various forms of cultural and political resistance. The hybrid is seen as a term which holds the potential to radically contest dualisms through the articulation of its contradictions through strategies of subversion (Bhabha 1994:112). Iain Chambers (1994) also celebrates difference with enthusiasm by focusing upon fusion, hybrids and new forms of difference which he claims are the result of global movements. In other words, hybrid and syncretic practices have been read as prescriptive models or celebrated as the only real forms of resistance (Lavie and Swedenburg 1996) where racialized

and gendered subjects may act out a multiplicity of fractal identities. There is a tendency, however, to get swept away by the euphoria of hybridity (Discipline and Place Collective 1997:529).⁹ Initially, I romanticized the notion of hybridity, but I now argue that hybridity offers, to employ a vernacular phrase, "a lot of talk - and no action". As Werbner points out, "the current fascination with cultural hybridity masks an elusive paradox" (Werbner and Modood 1997:1) as I will explain further.

The term "hybridity" intonates a combination of two "seeming" pure things, indicating how each is defined with respect to the other. Most often these dualisms inherent within the hybrid are imagined as opposites. Dualisms in the process of deconstruction are replaced with new dualisms, leading to a new hierarchy of cultural practices - where the exotic other is replaced with the term "hybrid" (Yuval-Davis 1996). Dualisms, therefore, are not sufficiently punctured as it assumes a particular purity between categories (Marin 1996). If we consider hybrids, we almost seem to assume that we are dealing only with the mixture between seemingly pure specimens. It connotes notions of purification and a total separation between the pure and the defiled. Dominant forces still police the boundaries. For example, Bhabha's notion of third space (a place where alternative identities are envisioned beyond notions of geographical metaphors of margin and centre and essentialized racial labelling) intonates a purity between the poles and there is no temporal component as an area for theoretical exploration, clearly lacking a feminist of colour contemplation of a politics of location.¹⁰

⁹ At the same time that many academics have exalted hybridity, they are unclear about how to employ it. As Chow states, "In my own work, I tend not to work around a particular idea such as hybridity because I don't know what to do with it" (Chow in Discipline and Place Collective 1997:530). I would argue that the benefits of such a term are that it can provide a certain type of intervention, depending upon the place and context to which it refers. For a subtle and insightful critical interrogation of hybridity, see Young (1995).

¹⁰ I remain ambivalent about Bhabha's contributions to cultural studies. As Rose suggests, however, my tentative contemplations may well delight Bhabha himself (see Rose 1995b). On one hand, I agree with Mitchell (1997) and Peet (1997) both of whom imaginatively critique Bhabha's work. Peet insinuates that Bhabha is a seductive master of ambiguity who uses a profusion of spatial terms as a powerful device towards vagueness. Although drawing from novels and texts to illustrate his examples, Bhabha's work remains highly theoretical, which is abundantly clear to geographers who wish to "ground" his explorations somewhere in real time and space. On the other hand, I am fascinated by his arguments in light of my empirical revelations, yet realize that it would take another dissertation to explore the potential fusion of his theoretical ideas and my interview material. For a provocative and persuasive critique of Bhabha's work as performance, see Rose (1995b).

Secondly, devoting ourselves to the celebration of the new "hybrid", we exclude their very real proliferation in the past. It assumes that ideas of hybridity, cultural mixing and matching, often characterized through the examples of pop culture and food, etc, are novel. Rather, like the state of "multiethnicity", it is not: instead, the current positioning of them as new is the result of an ancient history of confrontations among unequal cultures and forces which relies upon their subjugation in order for their continued existence. The myth of "brand-new ethnicities" has largely been a hoax devised by modernist Enlightenment theory and colonialist discourse concerning the so-called homogeneity of cultures (Young 1995). Thirdly, to blindly celebrate the notion of the hybrid means to ignore the very real complexity and collusion of cultural hybridity with biological hybridity. It misses out the important "theological thread" connecting biological and cultural conceptions of difference, which represents the site for many of these deceptive ideas about purity, where the hybrid is a mix of the seeming "pure" and "contaminated", reasserting another binary conception and echoing biological determinist arguments once more as Young asserts:

"Hybridity thus makes difference into sameness, and sameness into difference, but in a way that makes same no longer the same, the different no longer simply different...repeating and reproducing the sites of their own cultural production whose discordant logic manifests itself in structural repetitions...it shows that we are still locked into parts of the ideological network of a culture that we think and presume we have surpassed...always reiterat[ing] and reforc[ing] the dynamics of the same conflictual economy whose tensions and divisions it re-enacts in its own antithetical structure..in reinvoking the concept of hybridity, we are re-utilizing the exact vocabulary of Victorian racialism" (Young 1995:26-27, 9).

A renewed emphasis upon hybridity can veil larger problems of power inequalities associated with categorization. To remain caught up in the celebration of discourses on difference is to continue to reproduce the error of misplaced concreteness encouraged by what Zack calls a "genetic logic" (Zack 1992) and Spickard refers to as the illogic of racial categories (Spickard 1992).

If politics and power are explored in the deconstruction of the hybrid, it is often argued that they provide key sites of intervention in narratives of race and nation. As Mitchell points out, "without denying the potential for resistance...the notion of the hybrid [cannot always] be

equated with a politically progressive agenda" (Mitchell 1997:533). Indeed, the abstract and liminal space of the hybrid can in fact be easily appropriated by dominant forces, obscuring the importance of contemporary economic process which have been used strategically for economic gain. Cultural hybridity as a concept is limited because race is not carefully problematized, whiteness is seen as normative, and it assumes that we are playing on a level field where power dynamics are invisible, or differences are equal (Ifekwunigwe 1997b). Steele argues that the rhetoric of "good intentions"- diversity and cultural hybridity included - deflect from the real issues which include persistent inequities, "a relentless racial politics that erodes more common ground every day" (Steele 1995:27). There is a celebration of difference and mixing, but the power dynamics between those differences are not fully problematized. Finally, the idea of cultural hybridity has particular personal and political connotations for the multiethnic individual, who herself can be envisioned as the very emblem of hybridity given her multiethnic status. To celebrate the existence of the multiethnic individual as "hybrid" without problematizing the very real shifting configurations of power surrounding how she is simultaneously both raced and gendered is superficial. While the literature on hybridity provides a marked contrast with the previous work in critical race theory by presenting identity in a very optimistic and upbeat way, providing a much less sombre exploration of race than has been previously available, I am afraid that its agenda is not quite as politically progressive as had been originally envisioned.

Spatial metaphors Another significant train of thought resulting from the discourse on difference was the proliferation of the use of spatial metaphors among theorists in the social sciences. A number of geographers have pointed to the prominence of spatial references outside of the discipline of geography (Smith and Katz 1993; McDowell 1993b; Bondi 1992). Perhaps largely inspired by poststructuralism, social contemporary theory turned to spatial metaphors to theorize difference in order to contemplate how identity is related to the categories of place and space. Feminists played a large role in the early prominence of spatial metaphors as their work became saturated with spatial imagery (Spivak 1987; hooks 1992; Probyn 1990). Feminist writers like bell hooks actively employed spatial imagery, weaving a colourful discussion of a politics of location, thereby developing a "geographical imagination" which did not deny difference or play second string to a universal masculinity. Rutherford (1990) insisted that

notions of multiple identities dislodged the "margin and centre", leading to their eventual transformation and representation. Mohanty (1991b) explained that when the centre and margin dichotomy was undermined, spaces would open up between the centre and margins, thus allowing for communication between margins with the use of the centre as the dominant interlocutor (Mohanty 1991a). The notion of a *politics of location* (Bondi 1993; Mohanty 1991b)¹¹ was introduced, where feminists became increasingly interested in the place that location plays in the construction of gendered identities.

A politics of location implies that any subject can be located within particular discursive and material mappings of power, resistance and subjectivity. This understanding was combined with their previous interests in the destabilization of the analytical category of "woman" (Simonsen 1996; Henderson 1995; Giroux and McClaren 1994). Geographers, increasingly anxious about the claim that knowledges are multiple and contested, became alarmed at the notion of space being fluid and discursively constructed. Social theorists tended to fetishize place in their analyses rather than unravel fully the social relations constituted within those places (Bondi and Domosh 1992).¹² Although we have witnessed a flurry of spatial metaphors being utilized in discourses of difference as cultural theorists have stumbled upon social geography as if it were an oasis in the desert¹³, it is ironic to note that place is largely unproblematised in their discussions (Simonsen 1996). The parallels between the employment of spatial metaphors among geographers and social scientists remained relatively unexplored, and there was

¹¹ Mohanty (1991a) offered a key reading into the literature on spatial metaphors rampant in feminist theory during this time by citing Benedict Anderson (1983) and Dorothy Smith's notion of the "relations of ruling" (1987) in her analysis of community. Mohanty redefines community as a contested cartography, where place is continually relational - not a categorical nor a territorial concept - and sees places as constructed from alliances and oppositional struggles to lines of power.

¹² Geographers like Harvey (1993), Massey (1993) and Soja (1989) offered significant critiques of the discussions on spatial metaphors. However, Soja tends to ignore the figurative dimension of space, instead choosing to underplay the subtleties of the social construction of space in his enthusiasm to reassert space in critical social theory. For a more nuanced understanding of space and the complexity of interlocking social relations within places see Massey (1992) who explores how space relations are constitutive of change.

¹³ Among those cultural theorists who seem overawed by geographical contributions are Probyn, who claims, "I am inspired by the ways in which feminist and postmodern geographers..conceptualize space in down-to-earth terms" (Probyn 1995:77-78). Morley (1997) also salutes geography's many charms, not to mention Bhabha (1994) whose extensive use of spatial metaphors "should give geographers...considerable pause for thought" (Rose 1995b:369).

widespread confusion over whose space - real or metaphorical - was being discussed (Smith and Katz 1993). Excluded in these explorations are grounded examples which explain how these very fragments are mobilized in the constructions of places or in forms of solidarity¹⁴ outside of the theoretical realm.

Bondi and Domosh were among the first feminist geographers to look critically at the use of spatial figures in contemporary theoretical debates, insisting that spatial references allude to our own positionings within different contexts (Bondi and Domosh 1992). Some other pivotal geographical interventions at this time included Liz Bondi's article "Locating Identity Politics" (1993) which challenged identity politics as problematic for the women's movement. Bondi emphasizes the importance of certain version of essentialism and suggests that place may be a valuable tool towards shifting a politics of identity into a politics of location (Probyn 1990). Bondi bridges the impasse between certain kinds of identity politics by calling for the need to define identity within context-dependent spheres. Bondi encourages a more thoughtful exploration of how place and related spatial metaphors are understood, much like Soja and Hooper who argue for a renewed spatiality that creates new sites for struggle and alliance across "separated communities of resistance" (Soja and Hooper 1993:189). Jackson's (1993) paper "Identity and the cultural politics of difference" followed in the same vein, asking about the consequences of thinking about fragmentation and the pluralization of identities. Jackson urges us not to simply:

"celebrat[e] the complexities of human difference (like some kind of multicultural cocktail party) or deplor[e] the fragmentation of identity (in some kind of lament for the world we have lost)" (Jackson 1993:2)

Suggesting some more inherently geographic ways of thinking through these changes of cultural politics, which he deems as, "the wide range of political movements that have supplanted the

¹⁴ An important exception is Mohanty's query regarding whether or not "third world" women make up any kind of constituency (Mohanty 1991a). She suggests political, rather than biological or locational grounds for alliances across divisive boundaries, an idea which McDowell reads as tantalizing for feminist geographers (McDowell 1993b). Although McDowell suggests that Mohanty's ideas are reminiscent of those of feminist geographer Massey's notion of a progressive sense of place, I will show that few feminist geographers have begun to map out the conflicting and paradoxical terrains of alliances across differences between women.

older class-based antagonisms that have long provided the principal axis of social conflict" (ibid:2) Jackson proposes a politics of position which would allow for the complex and plural nature of existing identities while opening up the possibility of their transformation.

Following from Jackson's critique, Sibley (1995) warns us not to be dragged away by the sweeping tide of hybridity. In his critique of Iain Chambers' Migrancy, Culture and Identity (1994), Sibley (1995) wonders what has happened to place, reflecting suspiciously that persistent features of socio-spatial relations are problems defined by the firm contours of territorially based conflict, associated with the dynamics of race, gender and class. The majority of studies which celebrate space retain the notion as an unproblematic category - a given, passive material upon which place is inscribed - rather than a site where complex social relations take place (Hooper 1995; Keith and Pile 1993). Geographers emphasize that space needs to be seen as conflictual, a place of complex social relations involving the interactive productions of material, symbolic and lived spaces (Hooper 1995). Not unlike place, power is also unproblematicized in discourses on difference. To borrow from a vernacular phrase: it's hard to "fight the power" when it's moving all over the place. Power dynamics are envisaged as being so inherently mobile and chaotic that regional, global or economic powers which structure very real inequities are seemingly way too complex to map. In the process of celebrating cultural-hybrid utopias, the literature has tended to turn its attention away from actually mapping out the multiple sites of power and troublesome places of resistance (Duncan 1996). The discourse of difference tends to veil the ways we may be able to tell stories which document multiple intersections of disadvantage and privilege. How can one experience both privilege and disadvantage at the same time in a social sphere?

I also wonder why gender seems so absent from discussions about multiple and fragmented identities. Clearly, one reason is that the arena is dominated by men: namely, Stuart Hall and Homi Bhabha, the two "big names" in the field. While their work reflects provocative discussion, it is often dressed up in an enigmatic vocabulary, couched in language that makes it more inaccessible than it need be, reflecting a largely patriarchal approach. As Fraser reminds us, "[to simply] undo binary oppositions in high culture literary texts [does not necessarily make for a contribution] to social transformation" (Fraser 1989:4). Secondly, although the mutually

constitutive discourses of race, nation, the local and the global are unravelled in valuable and contestatory ways, I would argue that the work of these theorists presumes an always already masculine subject. Indeed, I am not alone in making these claims. As Rose notes, “the optimism of Bhabha’s brave new hybrid world...is perhaps gendered in both its practice and its writing” (Rose 1995b:372). Theorists like Bhabha tend to overaccentuate hyperfluency in favour of a negation of the social as Rose remarks wryly:

“[Bhabha’s] spatialities remain analytical, not lived...he remains resolutely disembodied, unbloodied if not bowed...his violence remains epistemic and not bloody” (Rose 1995b:372).

I am left wondering how one may be able to envision mapping Bhabha’s ideas about “affiliative solidarity” (Bhabha 1994:230) in the social, exploring the potential of applying the theoretical underpinnings of fragmented and multiple identities towards a study of gender. Claiming that women are often uncritically contemplated as a single solidarity in approaches to diversity, Yuval-Davis (1996) advocates the development of a transversal politics which would give recognition to specific positionings of gender instead. However, the dialogue exploring these rich possibilities remains very limited. To summarize, the work on fractured and fractured and fragmented identities reflects a striking gender bias as it refuses to acknowledge the complex ways in which race and gender are co-constructed variables, nor does it allow for the possibility of exploring how individuals are raced and classed in different ways in different places.

In the previous section, I have endeavoured to illustrate the problematic nature of the discourse on difference by exploring its highly theoretical and nebulous nature. I have demonstrated that the literature on fragmented and fluid identities is missing a critically political voice. I reviewed readings in cultural hybridity by pointing out its gender bias and its reluctance to ground largely theoretical claims through empirical work. Finally, I raised my concerns with the proliferation of spatial metaphors being utilized uncritically by many theorists who do not fully acknowledge the myriad of ways in which social relations are constitutive of spatial dynamics. I will now discuss some of the key interventions offered in critical “mixed race” theory which attempt to disrupt some of these discourses.

2.6 THE INTERVENTION OF MULTIETHNIC VOICES

"It seems that feminist theorists...may be the persons most able to develop flexible models [of the multiethnic experience] that truly allow for diversity...but first, more feminist theorists...will have to reach out beyond their boundaries of cultural safety to understand issues of race" (Root 1990:202)

One of the key interventions offered in the debates on difference was through the voices of multiethnic researchers. More recent examinations of multiethnic identity readily adopt the theoretical leanings of the discourses on difference by accentuating the fluid and flexible nature of identity. Furthermore, they add and expand upon these approaches by "grounding" these studies through real-life examples of border crossing and the day to day dismantling of racial categories which respond to Bondi's call to resist and undermine the dominant myths that serve to sustain particular systems of power relations (Bondi 1993). These works focus upon the role of society in regards to the conception of the multiethnic identity. There is a recognition that the multiethnic individual is not necessarily deviant, nor is he/she compared to those with supposedly "stable" ethnic identities. Instead, there is a recognition that all identities are multiple, fragmented and socially constructed while focusing upon how the multiethnic individual defies racial classifications. Finally, there is an emphasis upon the diversity of the multiethnic experience, often with an emphasis upon the interconnectedness of race, gender class and sexuality (Allman 1996; Streeter 1996; Twine 1996). I have endeavoured to illustrate how multiethnicity has been positioned as being "out of place" through socially constructed "differences" and reflects a particular historical trajectory about scientific racism. More recently, multiethnic researchers have critiqued the binary and static representation of the multiethnic experience. Considered by many to be the pioneering multiethnic psychologist, Maria P.P. Root engineered new ways to think through what she deems a multiracial identity. Root asserts that the influence of antimiscegenist attitudes (Provine 1973) has had a profound effect upon conclusions which tended to reinforce particularly static constructions of identity. To combat these tendencies, recent studies on multiethnic identity have been characterized by interdisciplinary collaboration and researcher sensitivity to the uniqueness of the multiracial experience. The early work in critical "mixed race" theory explored interracial marriages which included data on courtship and marriage as well as the stability and frequency of marriages (see C. Hall 1996; Mathabane 1992) which explored the history of lack of social support for mixed

marriages. The focus of the literature since that time has generally attempted to recover America's multiracial history (Forbes 1988) and to extend knowledge of multiethnic beyond the bounds of a black-white duality. More recently, Asian-White (Johnson and Nagoshi 1986) and Native American-Black (Forbes 1988) mixes have been studied. Attention has been focused upon racial mixes between groups where there is the most distance both culturally and socially - blacks and Europeans, Japanese and blacks, Japanese and Europeans (Ifekwunigwe 1997; Root 1992). I have previously outlined how early literature on multiethnic identity substantiated the popular belief that multiethnic children suffer from serious identity complexes. Current research counters that claim by focusing upon ideological racist beliefs inherent within the environment or context of the multiethnic individual. Root (1994) claims that multiraciality poses no inherent types of stress that would result in psychological maladjustment; any distress related to being multiracial is likely to be a response to an environment that has internalized racist beliefs (Root 1994). Tizard and Phoenix (1993) echo that notion in their study entitled, Black, White or Mixed Race? by illustrating how multiethnic children often see advantages in their situations, running counter to the widespread belief that multiethnic children suffer from identity problems. Multiethnic individuals protest against the confinements of the socially constructed categories of race in particular ways. They have demanded to be recognized as descendants of more than one racial category. These theories emphasize the interaction of social, familial, and individual variables within a context that interacts with history and moves away from models of adjustment and identity development. They consider the complex contexts in which identity formation takes place, focusing on the role society plays rather than focusing on the "other" status of the multiethnic individual:

"It is the marginal status imposed by society rather than the objective mixed race of biracial individuals which poses a severe stress to positive identity development" (Root 1990:184).

This echoes Stonequist (1937) who emphasized that the status and role of a particular "mixed blood" group can be taken as an index of the larger race problem and in turn the development of the "mixed blood" class reacts back upon the general situation, modifying it to an extent. Rather than placing the onus upon the individual to "fit into" the social structure, an emphasis is placed upon the strategies that the multiethnic person may employ, focusing upon the

multiethnic person's navigation through fluid, as opposed to static, social relations. Instead of concentrating upon the absolute resolution of identity (as if identity is something that must be resolved), more recent studies of multiethnic identity emphasize identity as one which is continually shifting and changing. Root proposes, "the individual may shift their resolution strategies throughout their lifetime in order to nurture a positive identity" (Root 1990:186). Other researchers examining multiethnic identity have echoed this notion, focusing the conclusions of their research through multidimensional models which allow the possibility that the individual may have concurrent affiliation and multiple, fluid identities with different social groups (see Iijima-Hall 1992; Stephan 1992; Williams 1992; Gibbs and Hines 1992; Root 1990).

Root applauds these studies for "abolishing either/or classification systems that create marginality" (Root 1992:6). By discarding these models, new studies reflect a defining moment in the history of research on multiethnic individuals. Emphasis is placed upon the liberation (as opposed to the confinement) of the racially mixed person from the oppressive hierarchy of racial categories. For example, Teresa Kay Williams concludes that:

"the process of identity development is fascinating and dynamic, yet personal and complex. Each one will taste what the larger society has to offer and will spit out what does not suit him or her" (Williams 1992:302).

Some multiethnic researchers recently have emphasized the importance of unravelling the importance of traditional heterosexual roles in maintaining the separation of genders and the purity of races (Allman 1996; Streeter 1996) where white supremacy and male superiority are inextricably linked. Drawing upon the work of many feminist discussions of gender roles (Ware 1992) Allman explores the Victorian domestic feminine ideal who communicates notions of purity, piety and domesticity, an asexual and frail creature, who was necessarily white and class privileged (Allman 1996). She was contrasted against the stereotypical image of the hypersexualized, exotic woman of colour (Nakashima 1992; Collins 1990). White, class-privileged, male identity depended upon its image as protector and keeper of white womanhood. Thus the hypersexualization of women of colour served to excuse and justify the rape of women of colour by white men (Allman 1996). Streeter explains how ambiguous racial identity conflicts with the miscegenation taboo where in order for norms of racial purity to complement norms

of heterosexuality, multiethnic individuals must marry people of colour in order to prevent further transgressions of the colour line (Streeter 1996). These works begin to explore how the history of racialized genders, maintained through sexuality, continue to influence current understandings of the co-construction of race and gender as well as the role of heterosexuality in maintaining the separation of gender and purity of race (Young 1995; Streeter 1996).

Another key intervention in the research on multiethnic identity is provided by Jayne O. Ifekwunigwe (Ifekwunigwe 1997; forthcoming). Her work differs from that of Maria Root in that she approaches issues of multiethnicity from an anthropological perspective, interweaving in the voices of many cultural theorists like Hall and Gilroy. Her path-breaking work and provocative ideas have made an invaluable contribution to the development of this thesis. Ifekwunigwe reveals the lives of the *metisse*, a term she has chosen to identify project participants who have African or African Caribbean fathers or British European mothers. Ifekwunigwe is the first multiethnic researcher in the UK to attempt to unravel the paradoxical representations of race, place, nation, culture and generation through qualitative ethnographic work with *metisse* women (in Bristol). By addressing those who are “classified as neither black nor white” (Ifekwunigwe 1997:127) Ifekwunigwe effectively addresses the problematic nature of place and belonging among individuals who identify as “mixed race.” Ifekwunigwe introduces the dynamic of gender to discussions in critical “mixed race” theory, a dynamic which has been largely ignored in explorations of multiethnic experience (although see Root 1997). Ifekwunigwe demonstrates how *metisse* women can illuminate the contradictions and skewed logic of an hollowed racialized discourse by invoking the textual strategy of the *griot(te)*, exploring the inherent contradictions in ethnography between the oral and literal text. She formulates a new lexicon to more appropriately describe the lives of participants who:

“by virtue of birth and ‘blood’ do not fit neatly into preordained sociological and anthropological categories..[thus] creat[ing] non-hierarchical discourses of difference which silence colour-blind ideologies...normaliz[ing] the lived and complex cultural realities of metis(se) individuals and their families...writing against previous psychopathological and monolithic interpretations of experiences” (Ifekwunigwe 1997:128).

Ifekwunigwe clearly shows how contradictory meanings of gender, generation, cultures and race are shaped by cultural memories among participants in her study. Reading their narratives as

“political testimonies”, Ifekwunigwe asserts that *metisse* women “re-insert themselves as active subjects, creating their own place in the re-telling of English African Diaspora histories” (Ifekwunigwe 1997:146). Thus, multiethnic researchers like Ifekwunigwe and Root provide an autobiographical and psychological perspective on multiethnic identity which marks an important contribution in parallel with the current debates about fragmented and flexible identities. “Mixed race” studies illustrate the slippage between seemingly discrete racial categories to demonstrate how race is a clumsy social construct (Zack 1995; Scales-Trent 1995) and apprehend the concept by noting how the concept could not exist without the concept of racial purity. However, the majority of this literature tends to reify the category of race by continuing to use the term “mixed race” to define people of multiethnic parentage (the most obvious exceptions being Ifekwunigwe 1997 and Ifekwunigwe forthcoming). Perhaps due to the psychological training of most of these writers, few analyses have integrated the tenets of the discourse on difference through empirical research (although see Allman 1996). While Ifekwunigwe is the only multiethnic researcher to begin to embrace the possibilities of unravelling the complex processes of racialization while taking on board the theoretical underpinnings of poststructuralist and new identities debates, no-one has of yet explored these dynamics through an accentuated discussion of how multiethnic women negotiate spaces which are continually imbued with various racialized meanings. Some multiethnic researchers have suggested that this may be an imperative variable in the construction of a racialized identity as Root asserts:

“An individual may be perceived differently and assigned a different racial identity in a different part of the country... I think the notion of space and women taking space is very important from the most intimate level in relationships, to family, to work, to community, to nation, and to international representation. The notion of nation and space is very salient right now, of course... [and no-one yet has tackled] this issue, particularly on an international basis” (Root 1990:199; Root 1997:personal correspondence).

However, few studies have of yet unravelled the complex and varied processes of racialization, or how women of multiethnicity effectively challenge racialized meanings in various places. This is, of course, difficult terrain to map and reflects the focus I intend to pursue in this dissertation.

2.7 CONCLUSION: MAPPING OUT NEW SPACES

To conclude this chapter, I will reiterate some of my major points and then propose my goals in the rest of the empirical work which follows. I have endeavoured to demonstrate that embodied within scientific racism's anatomical and physiological narratives influenced by the Enlightenment are subsequent cultural values which dictate how people should be ordered according to racial categories, and the roles and spaces they ought to inhabit. I have tried to show how the multiethnic person has been made intelligible in ways which continue to maintain the relations of the racialized hierarchy. Her very presence represents the excess that eludes containment. I have demonstrated how psychologists and historians, among others have rendered the multiethnic individual as intelligible by positioning her as "out of place."

I have also emphasized that contemporary disruptions in academic debate have provoked a dislodgement of the modernist Enlightenment order, calling attention to the socially constructed nature of all categories of identity. I have explored the implications of these disruptions in geography, and in particular, feminist geography. I have argued that these paradigms, while valuable, have inevitably moved feminist geography into a period of restlessness and fatigue.

By placing emphasis on the characteristics that differentiate the category of "women" to which they belong from other groups (race and class for example), the notion of difference has become the all important axis upon which, it seems, analyses rest. Instead of underscoring the importance of developing innovative coalitions among women of varying backgrounds and experiences, we have focused our energies upon the insistence and romanticization of difference, falling back on the tenets of race, class and gender as the key frames to differentiate. This model reveals some very real limitations, forcing us to ask some difficult questions:

***how can we talk about race in geography beyond the mantra "race is a social construction " and beyond the superficial celebration of the hybrid?**

***how does the discourse on difference play out in the social landscape?**

***can we cite examples of complex and contextual agency embodied in the everyday?**

To take the first point, I hope to conceive of the self in a way that spills over the tortured social trio of race, class and gender. Many feminist analyses are preoccupied with drawing from this trio to discuss identity. Although Brah notes, “ethnicities are always gendered in terms of both how they construct sexual difference and how they are lived” (Brah 1992:143) few studies have yet to offer local manifestations of these articulations where we are able to understand how gendered bodies are raced and classed and similarly, raced bodies are gendered and classed accordingly. A vague suggestion that ethnicities are always gendered and classed does not provide a clear lens to view the local particularity or articulation of these dimensions in particular places. It is this very specificity of the processes of racialization within zones that I unravel. I explore what a potential “un-naturalized discourse” would look like as developed by Kobayashi and Peake (1994) in feminist geography by arguing for a revisioned spatiality that creates from difference new sites of construction; a spatiality of inclusion rather than developing further geographies of exclusion (Sibley 1995). In particular, I explore how participants unnaturalize the landscapes upon which gendered and racialized relations are played out. The research explores the possibility of mapping spaces where “radical subjectivities can multiply, connect and combine in polycentric communities” (Soja and Hooper 1993:192).

Secondly, I wish to explore how the discourse on difference plays itself out in the social landscape. The discourse of difference insists upon a highly theoretical encounter with the disorderings of identity. Few empirical studies have attempted to integrate some of these discourses, but when they have, they have largely focused upon the containment of particular ethnic groups (see Baumann 1996) or upon the black/white divide (see Alexander 1996). Few analyses have offered a way to bridge these highly theoretical musings and the concrete, day-to-day lives of women. To this end, I believe we should develop new feminist geographies where we complement our theoretical analyses with grounded examples explaining how these new developments in theory might play out in the social landscape.

Feminist geography can play an integral role here by intervening in the impasse between concerns of essentialism and the very real diversity among women by looking at how processes of racialization and sexualization work in tandem to be place specific. Like McDowell, I believe

that “we must begin with the question of how gender attributes are constructed...in different ways and in particular contexts rather than taking “women” as a self-evident category of analysis”(emphasis mine, McDowell 1991:130). Spaces are made meaningful through experience, interaction and interpretation of gendered and racialized selves. We need to ask not only how gender and race relations are experienced and structured over space, but also how the social and spatial organization of day-to-day transgressions are experienced through the prisms of gender and racialization. In my empirical work, I engage in a trilogue by writing through the voices of participants, my own experiences of multiethnicity, and feminist analyses (Frankenberg 1993; Rose 1993a; Butler 1990) to develop more unusual links in feminist geography.

Thirdly, I am concerned with enhancing models of complex and contextual agency as theoretically developed by feminist theorists. Feminist debates on agency have been finessed by poststructuralist theorists like Nancy Fraser, who discusses the importance of holding new theoretical paradigms accountable to the demands of political practice. In developing her own model of agency, Fraser insists that there is always a plurality of agents and discourses and as academics, it is imperative that we open up these new arenas of struggle for study (Fraser 1989). In this dissertation, I hope to develop a more nuanced model of agency employed among the multiethnic women who participated in this study. Is agency always necessarily always conflictual and resistant? Are there other ways of imagining agency? The empirical work which follows examines how women of multiethnicity mobilize both their gendered and their racialized selves to create alternative feminist positions of power. I will explore how racialized borders are crossed by participants by focusing upon the ways they develop their own “unnatural” discourse. I document the cartographies of belonging among multiethnic women, emphasizing their agency and role in forging alliances with others. They denaturalize the racialized and gendered markings of themselves as subjects.

Finally, this thesis will attempt to map the experiences of the multiethnic women outside of oppressive representations by shedding light upon their various contradictory forms of agency.

As I have alluded to earlier in this chapter, I will explore an alternative reading of the experience of multiethnicity, which is often referred to in relation to the discourse on “passing.”

I will contrast that prevailing viewpoint by introducing the motif of the “trickster” in chapter seven to discuss the multiethnic woman’s more productive and less passive perspective of her racialized and gendered identity. I will contend that the seeming invisibility of insidious racist and sexist discourses undermine our understanding of the multiethnic experience. Before launching into the empirical material, I will unveil the varied voices of the women that I interviewed, as well as interrogate my own complicit positioning as a multiethnic woman who conducted the research in the next chapter, “Same Differences? Challenging Insider/Outsider Positionings.”

Same Differences? Challenging Insider/outsider Positionings¹

3.1 INTRODUCTION

“Interviewing is rather like marriage: everybody knows what it is, an awful lot of people do it, and yet behind each closed front door there is a world of secrets” (Oakley 1981:31)

In this chapter, I will examine the nature of the twenty-four interviews I acquired which form the basis for this study. I spent the period between April 1994 to September 1996 in Toronto, carrying out interviews while I was working full-time as a television news researcher. Although I have previously explored the historical conditions which have given rise to these narratives in chapter two, “Racial Refiguring: developing “un-natural” discourses in feminist geography”, I have not yet unravelled my own complex role in the production of these stories. I will travel through a critical self-reflexive analysis of my participation in the acquisition of these narratives, asking some questions about the social processes through which these stories have been constructed and consumed in the empirical analysis.

Drawing from excerpts in my research diary, I suggest a move away from the increasing tendency among cultural theorists who consider interviews as “texts” or “discourses”. I argue that these labels distill and reduce the rich and empirical material to static representations. Instead, I will suggest that these personal narratives are socially produced by embodied, real people - myself and the interviewee - sharing experiences and feelings of everyday life in particular places. At each moment in the encounter of the interview process, split-second decisions are made about what to reveal to the interviewer and through what language to reveal it. Crucial to my analysis is the notion of power - the very act of telling one’s story to someone can be both empowering and debilitating, reflecting a stream of social actions. It is not simply what they say which is of note: instead, it is the complex social processes involved in the tellings. In spite of these intricate exchanges taking place during the interview process, feminist research methodologies have yet to provide adequate ways of mapping out these multifarious dynamics. I will attempt to problematize the “insider/outsider” model which has been discussed

¹ I initially entitled this chapter “Same Differences?” as I found the paradox appealing. It came as a surprise to discover that I was not alone in employing it as a title. I am in good company with both Gillian Rose who uses the phrase in her discussion of tradition and patriarchy (Rose 1995e) and multiethnic fiction writer Danzy Senna who employs the phrase as a chapter heading in her novel *Caucasia* (1998).

extensively by feminist geographers in terms of their own research (Nast 1994) by drawing upon Katz' assertion that we are "always, all at once, in the field" (Katz 1994:72). I will describe my own particular status as an "insider" - a multiethnic woman carrying out research on other multiethnic women, and ask what divides are salient in the research process. I propose the notion of "dialoguing"², a term I use to describe my own tendency to converse during the interview, to challenge the notion of the binary opposition inherent in the research process.

I want to problematize my role as not only an interviewer who provoked stories from participants in my study (Plummer 1995:21) but also as a consumer of these tales. My critical academic interpretation of these stories collides with my own interpretations of my multiethnic experiences. My readings of these personal narratives are no doubt clouded by my own sense of being in the world and while I have been actively engaged in assembling life stories of the women I interviewed, I would offer that this does not mean I have a full grasp of their actual life experiences. Finally, I will explore how I analyzed the material I gathered through a process entitled "mind mapping" and point out the advantages and disadvantages of such an analysis.

In chapter two, I described the prevailing hypothesis that multiethnicity creates marginality, and therefore must lead to social maladjustment. New studies which contradict this myth seem to be conducted largely in social psychology by multiethnic researchers who obviously have a very personal link to issues of multiple identity (Root 1996). The new models have insisted that the multiethnic individual can experience "the best of both worlds" and refuses to fit into a binary conception of self (Funderburg 1994); that individuals can in fact hold, merge and respect multiple ethnic positions and perspectives simultaneously (Williams 1996; Nakashima 1992), and that the multiethnic individuals can often negotiate their racialized identity and decode their ambiguity to the perceiver depending upon the social context (Twine 1996; Zack 1995). These empirical studies provide a contemporary context where the multiethnic individual points out

²Readers may well recognize the phrase "dialoguing" as deriving from the work of Mikhail Bakhtin. Although I acknowledge the importance of Bakhtin's contributions to critical cultural practices (especially his notion of dialogics), due to obvious space constraints in this thesis, I have chosen not to engage with his work in detail. Instead, as I argue later in the chapter, I have developed my own definition of the phrase. However, I refer the reader to the sharp critical exploration of feminism and Bakhtinian thought in Hohne and Wussow (1994), Emerson (1997) and Todorov (1984) for cogent analyses of Bakhtin's dialogical principle.

the archaic use of racial categories to define their identity, often illustrating the destructive use of race.

While I applaud the important contribution these studies have made to the existing field of critical "mixed race" studies (see Root 1996; Nakashima 1996; Williams 1996, Choudhury 1995) I still feel there are a number of debates which have been ignored. Firstly, I wish to return to some of the earlier arguments I made regarding why I chose to pursue this study within a particular geographic region. Researchers working in the arena of "mixed race" identity have called for a variety of perspectives on what it means to be racially mixed in America (Nakashima 1996:97) and Britain (see Ifekwunigwe forthcoming), but as Murphy-Kilbride (1994) points out, no-one has yet undertaken a comprehensive study of the experiences of multiethnicity in Canada (although see Ray 1996 and Camper 1994) even though critical "mixed race" researchers have insisted that "geography plays a large part in the options the [multiethnic] individual has" (Root 1990:202). This dearth of literature seems even more surprising given Toronto's diverse ethnic composition (Henry and Tator 1985). It is the study itself which is marginal with respect to the phenomena studied. Secondly, the majority of research on multiethnicity has been limited to the exploration of identity development among children and adolescents (Tizard and Phoenix 1993) and so I chose to focus my study upon women, not children. Finally, research has focused upon the impact of family dynamics on identity development of multiethnic individuals (see Ray 1996; Root 1996; Camper 1994; Ifekwunigwe forthcoming) and so I chose not to interrogate kinship in great detail although the family does play a vital role in identity formation.³ There were certain issues I was interested in teasing out. One was the issue of group affiliations, reflected earlier in chapter two, "Racial Refiguring: developing "un-natural" discourses in feminist geography" and paralleling Thornton's inquiry about potential future research in multiethnicity. He insists that if the multiethnic identity is

³ It is worthwhile to mention the salient relationship between family dynamics and the multiethnic individual. The family environment is critical in helping the multiethnic child understand and value their ethnicities. However, often children of interracial relationships experience a rocky start when such partnerships results in the severing of ties among extended family due to racism (Root 1990; see Mathabane 1992) and if the multiethnic individual identifies with an oppressed minority ethnic group, it can subsequently generate feelings of inferiority especially if the parent is treated as such in the extended family (see Ray 1996; Root 1990). These kinds of dynamics can often create tremendous interpersonal conflict which may lead the multiethnic person to reject parts of their heritage. As Root puts it, "rigid...and psychological boundaries communicate hatred and judgement; they mirror to [an extent] community feelings [associated with race]" (Root 1990:192).

unique, it may be reflected “in how and with whom we bond” (Thornton 1996:116). Thornton suggests that work in this area ought to focus upon multiethnic individuals’ definitions of group boundaries and how strongly they identify with ethnic and other groups. Secondly, recent clinical data available on multiethnicity has illustrated that multiethnic individuals feel that current racial categories are inadequate to describe their racialized sense of identity (Funderburg 1994). I wanted to discern how Canadian multiethnic women felt about a myriad of aspects regarding their identity - not simply their racialized sense of self. In the lived world, issues of race are accompanied by layers of meaning about sexuality, beauty, intelligence and wealth, femininity and group alliances, all of which play a role in the manufacturing and presentation of multiethnic women. I argue the current research insists that race dictated or determined identity, whereas I was curious to discover how participants contemplated issues of racialization in relation to their own identity. Indeed, I wanted to see if in fact there were other socially constructed cleavages which contributed towards identity formation and how these factors intersected with issues of race. I also questioned the relevance of the continuing questions in the developing field of “critical whiteness studies” (Frankenberg 1997) for women of multiethnicity. What was their relationship to whiteness as defined by these readings? Finally, as a multiethnic woman myself, it would be false to assume that I do not have my own series of preconceived notions and ideas about what it means to be multiethnic in Canada. By carrying out these interviews, I embarked upon a personal and professional journey, a cathartic identity excavation by listening to others’ worlds/words about their own experiences of multiethnicity and comparing them to my own. I was particularly interested in how the multiple aspects of these women’s identity allows them release from the obligation to see themselves within the constraints of white eurocentrism and *the particular strategies they choose to employ* in order to escape the categorization of stereotypes associated with identification.

3.2 METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

Identifying participants for this study has been challenging. It allowed me to see how I have been using the category of “mixed race woman” as a self-evident label for analysis which creates all sorts of exclusionary effects. In order to further re-think the categories, definitions and concepts

used to formulate the definition of “multiethnic” I deliberately did not focus my study upon a particular ethnic mix. I have chosen to interview a population whose identity includes the awareness, acknowledgement, and affirmation of multiple racial and cultural (ie ethnic) ancestries.⁴ It is often assumed that multiethnic individuals share identical experiences (Nakashima 1996) based upon an identification of stereotypical features, where multiethnic people look alike (C. Hall 1996). Researchers have chosen to focus upon specific ethnic compositions of biraciality, like Japanese-European (King and Dacosta 1996), Korean-European (Standen 1996), and African-American Jewish (Azoulay 1997; Zack 1997). More recently, non-European mixes have been explored, as in Comas-Diaz’s work on the “Latin-Negra”, or Latino-African-American mix (Comas-Diaz 1996). However, the focus has remained upon particular “bi-racial” mixes in order to keep their samples as “pure” as possible for comparison purposes⁵ which shows that much of the research on multiethnicity tends to follow monoracial paradigms. No study has chosen to sully its data with individuals of a variety of multiethnic compositions. I argue that previous research illustrates a distinctly modernist approach to a study on multiethnicity. It needs to be clarified that “mixed race” is also a socially constructed category like “race”, an idea I explore further in chapter six, “I’m a blonde haired, blue eyed black girl: mapping mobile paradoxical spaces”. I strongly felt that existing studies reflect a strong bias towards exploring the experiences of non-white/white mixes only (Mahtani and Moreno 1998). By researching a very specific ethnic composition, I believed I would limit participants’ definition of their ethnic identities, similar to the oppressive experience a multiethnic individual faces when checking off the “other” box in statistical questionnaires. Choosing a methodological approach which explored the identity issues of those with a specific two-part mixed ethnic identity can reiterate that racial designations are hierarchical and obscures the flexibility and freedom a multiethnic individual often exercises regarding ethnic allegiances (C. Hall 1996; Root 1996; Thornton 1996; Wardle 1996). It was my hope to move away from these sorts of categorizations. I therefore did not classify individuals into particular “bi-racial” categories.

⁴ Of course, this means I did not interview women who were in fact of “multiethnic” origins but refused to identify as such. Given the constraints of the thesis, I did not pursue this avenue, but I would contend that it would make an excellent research project in the future.

⁵ Perhaps this is because most of the research on biraciality has been conducted by clinical psychiatrists and psychologists who have adopted scientific quantitative analyses and require specific data samples for comparison purposes (Root 1992).

Many of the women I interviewed clarified in rich detail their multiple lines of ancestry where many multiethnic individuals are children of multiethnic mothers and fathers (for example, one grandparent Irish, one grandparent Native Indian, one grandparent Iranian, and one grandparent Polynesian). I deliberately chose such a wide heterogeneous sample in order to explore the ways in which race is performed and experienced contingent upon phenotype, among other factors. I did not want to encourage marginalization within "mixedness" by focusing only upon a particular "mix" or just "black/white crossings" (a term suggested by Ifekwunigwe 1998a).

The majority of studies on multiethnic individuals have utilized relatively small, selectively recruited samples. Researchers examining issues of multiethnic identity have urged new researchers to explore and consider qualitative in addition to quantitative empirical analyses (Root 1996) in order to ensure a broader understanding of the multiethnic experience. This research project has taken into consideration the calls among multiethnic researchers in its methodological design.

Why women only? I chose to interview women only. This addresses my concern that critical methodologies and theoretical perspectives be deployed to include those typically excluded from studies, especially women (Nast 1994; Rose 1993a; Stanley 1990) as well as Root's claim that "few studies have even considered gender differences in the experience of multiraciality" (Root 1996; however, for a provocative discussion of gender differences among multiethnic women, see Ifekwunigwe 1997). I consider interviewing women for this project an important step towards making the voices of ethnic women heard in feminist geographical enquiry, as well as offering a way to interrogate the often theoretical claim of feminists who insist race is co-constructed by gender (Root 1997; Eisenstein 1996; Ware 1992). Finally, it is important to note that the experience of multiethnicity among women is unique because it is compounded by gender bias (Camper 1994). Many critical "mixed race" theorists have suggested that the racialized experiences of multiethnic men and women are different. While women of multiethnicity may experience less direct oppression or difficulty in countering social barriers because "non-white men...have more social and economic powers than most women [and are thus] particularly threatening to [society]" (Root 1990:196) it has been offered that women of multiethnicity are more likely to have difficulty coping with the pervasive myths surrounding

the experience of multiethnicity and sexuality (Streeter 1996) where multiethnic women are read as "exotic" and sexually freer than other women (Camper 1994). These myths again demonstrate the links between race and sex (Zack 1997). Hence, I was curious to explore the multifaceted experience among multiethnic women who are simultaneously racialized and gendered.

Recruiting/finding the women

It's a balmy May night, warm and breezy, and I'm at the Madison with a large group of friends drinking beer and chatting effusively. The Madison is packed, the usual twenty-something university crowd is soaking in the atmosphere. I walk to the bathroom with a friend, and while she's checking out her hair in the mirror, she does a double-take at the girl behind us. "Look", she hisses. "She's got to be mixed." I glance behind her and shrug. My friend, also a journalist, smiles and says, "I bet she'd make a great interview." Before I can stop her, she goes up to her and says upbeat, "Hi, listen, I hope you don't mind my asking, but are you mixed? My friend here is doing a study on women who are mixed race, and..." The woman is evidently taken aback and doesn't believe her. She's startled and stutters, "Ah, what did you say?" I turn bright red and realize she thinks she's getting picked up in the bathroom. I make my apologies and drag my friend out of there before any further damage is done (Research diary May 15 1996)

Previous research on multiethnicity has illustrated that obtaining multiracial participants for research studies can be difficult, primarily because it is fraught with threats to validity (Root 1992). Identification and recruitment of multiethnic subjects is complex. Recruitment of multiethnic individuals will almost always yield selective samples. Even selective sampling techniques, such as word of mouth and newspaper advertisements, may only recruit a small number of participants. Some people may not respond to advertisements because some individuals of multiethnicity practice introverted racism, seeing their multiracial heritage as a negative status (Root 1997) whereas other multiracial individuals may not identify themselves as multiethnic or "mixed race" or "biracial" - to them, ethnic or cultural identity may not factor as strongly as other identity dimensions. Advertising for people of colour also proves problematic. For one, it will only recruit multiethnic individuals who identify themselves as such, and will exclude many other multiethnic individuals who successfully participate in "passing" for white. My initial attempt to acquire interview subjects through various advertisements⁶ reflected this difficulty. The advertisements I had pinned up on billboards at

⁶ The advertisements read as follows: Are you of mixed ethnicity? Do your parents come from different cultures,

universities and community centres in Toronto (York University; University of Toronto, Parkdale Community Centre; the CBC) failed miserably. I did recruit one participant through this manner, but she ended up moving to Vancouver before I could conduct the interview. There are obvious reasons why this method was not particularly successful. First of all, I could easily have been disguising suspicious motives behind the veil of the interview request - it might be read as a "pick-up" line, for example. The insistence on my part not to reify the term "race" by using it in the recruitment process might have led to puzzlement on behalf of readers of the ad about who was actually wanted for the interview. In reality, the majority of interview participants were recruited through word of mouth - through friends mentioning my research quest to other friends, colleagues and family. As a result, the majority of participants did in fact work in media-related fields, and although I did attempt to locate a diverse group of women from a variety of class backgrounds, this proved difficult. The population I interviewed reflects a very particular stance on multiethnicity. Participants were eager to discuss their own perceptions of their experiences, often to challenge and subvert existing stereotypes about the "mixed race woman". No doubt these desires spill over into the acquisition of the data. The importance of social networks is imperative here, as many of the women I interviewed I acquired through contact through either work contacts or friends.

The politics of recruitment

It's a Monday morning, and I'm sitting in the office when I get a phone call. The woman on the other line timidly asks for me and says, "I'm calling about the mixed race study." I ask her how she found out about the project, and she says, "Brendan told me about it." Apparently, my friend Brendan was in a bar over the weekend and approached this woman with an enthusiastic "Hey are you mixed?" which led to a long conversation about her ethnicity. He in turn told her about my study. When I talk to Brendan later, he says, "You know Minelle, this study of yours is so great. I get to go up to women in bars with a really good line. They always think I'm cool because I can say that I know a woman who is doing this study-it lends me some credibility because I can say I've got this woman friend, right?- and then not only do they agree to do the interview, but they go out with me afterwards!" I haven't licensed Brendan with this task, but he's apparently taken it upon himself to recruit participants for this study with a very insidious agenda. As a result, I'm loathe to carry out the interview. However, the woman is very eager to discuss her experiences. When I finally do interview this woman later on in the month, she reveals that she has been dating Brendan since their initial meeting. She's incredibly

or different countries? If so, I would welcome an opportunity to interview you. Please call Minelle at-

happy, and actually thanks me, saying, "You know, Minelle, if you weren't doing this study, Brendan and I never would have met!" (Research diary October 24 1996)

This vignette reveals a whole series of mixed agendas. I unveil it simply because we must have the courage to recognize our own complicity in others' oppression (Chouinard and Grant 1996) and I want to draw attention to my own personal responsibility in recruiting participants for this study. Selfishly, I was thrilled to acquire yet another interview and Sara's testimony turned out to be both powerful and gripping. However, I never once had imagined that my friends would be using my study as a way to make potential dates!⁷ I was appalled to discover this and put a stop to it at once. At the same time, however, Sara was so undeniably pleased to have the opportunity to voice her opinion about being multiethnic and was now involved in a satisfying relationship with someone courtesy of the interview project. Given the "tainted" way I had acquired a relationship with the potential interviewee, did that necessarily mean I would exclude her participation in the study? Did my own "feminist" take of the situation influence my reading of the situation? I have to stress my own non-neutrality and the myriad power relations involved in the research process (Nast 1994). In this particular situation, my own identification as a feminist clearly took precedence over my positioning as a multiethnic woman.

Specifics on interview population Defining the population as "multiethnic" did not reflect a naturalized choice in terms of "a place" or "a people". Instead, it is located and defined in terms of specific political objectives that (as such) cut across time and place. Such objectives involve a number of political criteria that operate on different but connected levels (Nast 1994:57). I chose to limit my focus to those women who *defined themselves as "mixed race" or "multiethnic"* (or biracial or multiracial or racially mixed or of mixed ethnic parentage). I preferred to give informants in my study the space to define themselves. If they choose to identify themselves as being multiethnic, I was, and remain, curious about the ways and reasons they have chosen those designations. In this fashion, I attempted not to label participants as "mixed race" or "multiethnic" myself. The majority of the women I have chosen to interview were between the ages of 20-35, although one was an adolescent and two were over forty. I

⁷ Brendan's attitude reflects the common myth that all multiethnic individuals are attractive, a notion which many of the women I talked to further problematized in greater detail (for theoretical analyses of this idea, see Streeter 1996).

have chosen this age group because at this stage in their lives, they have contemplated various stages and ways of identity construction. They are all born in Canada, or have moved to Canada before their teens. By limiting my sample to women who have lived in Canada the majority of their lives, I will be able to discern the role living in Canada has played in influencing their multiethnic identity which addresses Root's concern that the geography of the multiethnic individual plays a large role in identity formation (Root 1990). It was my hope that this criteria would allow for a discussion of wider questions of identity by incorporating questions surrounding identity and nationalism and therefore offer a contribution to debates about other forms of belongings. As I have mentioned earlier, I chose to interview participants who lived in or around the near vicinity of the city of Toronto because "Toronto has the largest non-white immigrant population in Canada" (Henry and Tator 1985:321) and it has been indicated that living in more liberal parts of a country may be necessary to exercise a wider array of "ethnic options" with less social resistance (Root 1990). Toronto also provided a practical site for interviews given that I was living and working there at the time I was carrying out this research.

The women's status in the work force was equally diverse. While the majority of women worked in a media-related field (eight of them worked as television producers or film producers) the majority were students either in high school, or pursuing an undergraduate or postgraduate degree (one, two, and five respectively). Only three of them had not attended university, and out of those three, two of them planned to attend soon (one was still seventeen, and the other was planning to return to high school in order to get her diploma). The women themselves were diverse in age, class, region of origin, sexuality, family situation and political orientation. However, all of them were living in Toronto or in the surrounding area at the time of the interview. The interviews were lengthy - most were between an hour and a half to four hours. Only a few of them took place over two sessions: indeed, most of them went straight for three hours.

It is difficult to categorize these women as a standardized group. However, there are some key similarities that must be acknowledged. Although the class categories within which these women defined themselves mean different things in different contexts, the majority of these women read themselves as being part of the "middle to upper class" segment of Canadian society because of

their respective educational backgrounds. Although I did try to recruit women of varying class status, I discovered that low to lower middle-class multiethnic womens' experiences of racialization are very much structured by the material and constrained financial nature of their lives. This in turn strongly influences how women "read their race", reflecting the ways in which race and class are co-constructed (Ware 1992). This is a particularly salient point and I will return to discuss the impact of these womens' advantageous class status throughout the thesis.

The group was more "educated" than expected - indeed, all of them had been to university, and twelve of them had postgraduate degrees - two of the women within that group had also explored issues of race in their graduate departments. Peppered through the interviews were very academic terms like "fragmentation", "borders", and "postmodernism", suggesting that these womens' lives were touched by the work of cultural theorists who are concerned with issues of identity. However, many of the women's descriptions of their early childhood positioned them within the lower to middle class bracket. For a brief thumbnail sketch of each participant, please see Appendix I.

The questions

"If we would have new knowledge, we must get a whole world of new questions"
(Langer 1942:10)

I interviewed twenty-four women of multiethnicity in Toronto. Although this number may appear small, I would like to reiterate that this study is qualitative, not quantitative.⁸ I chose to employ open-ended questions in my attempt to give women the space to speak for themselves.

The list of questions can be found in Appendix II. I devised this list after consulting with other multiethnic women, television journalists, and another multiethnic woman who had recently finished her own thesis on the topic (Ray 1996). I also conducted a "test-run" of the interview with five multiethnic women whereupon I received useful suggestions on how to improve the interview questions. Their responses were not included in my final empirical analysis. In the end, however, it is important to note that I never used all of the questions to structure my interview. In most exchanges, I used the questions as a "guide map". Normally, I would simply

⁸ Like Keith, however, I believe that defining a methodology as qualitative makes sense only in its implied opposition to a quantitative alternative (see Keith 1988:40).

ask the first question and then the rest of the interview would progress smoothly, where the interviewee would simply chat with me about her own experiences of being multiethnic. This would lead to many women becoming apologetic about not following what they expected to be a structured interview format despite my reassurances to the contrary.

Each interview took between two to three hours. I conducted these interviews every other weekend during the time period I was living in Toronto, between April 1994 and September 1996, or on an evening after both myself and the interviewee had finished working for the day. Each interview was conducted face-to-face at a place of the interviewee's choice, and tape-recorded. I intended to enter into a discussion with the interviewee through a free-flow of conversation versus a more stilted question/answer organization. My intention was not to structure the debate - I instead preferred to be guided by what emerged in the conversation with the interviewee. This reflects my interest in acquiring the personal stories of women and examining how they make sense of their experiences. Some of the listed questions that appear here were not asked in sequential order depending upon the free-flow of the interview. I felt it was very important to let these women guide the interview process. This normally meant I would take a quick glance at my interview questions beforehand, and then ask the first question. Sometimes I didn't even need to ask an initial question as the interviewee would just begin chatting. However, I would always begin the interview in the same way. I would hand the woman a copy of the questions to look at beforehand for a few minutes. If any questions seemed unfair, or she didn't want to answer them, I assured her we didn't have "to go there".

3.3 THE PROBLEMS OF "DOING GENDER"

I would like now to take up some of the problems of "doing gender" as explored by other feminist geographers. It is, as Parr points out, "a messy business" (Parr in Rose 1997b:314). I have previously discussed in chapter two how the analytical category of "woman" has come under scrutiny as a result of the deconstructionist turn. However, the dissolving of the category "woman" has profoundly destabilizing effects upon feminist research. J.K. Gibson-Graham (1996:234) asks, "How can we speak of our experiences as women? Can we still use women's experiences as resources for social analysis?" I would argue yes, because being a woman still situates me in a particular way in my life world, within the binary constraints of society

separated into the divide of men/women. However, there remains considerable debate in feminist circles as to what divides are salient when it comes to researching women. As such, I wish to problematize my own status as a woman of multiethnicity researching other multiethnic women.

My own multiethnic status: neither advantage nor disadvantage

I have just finished my interview with Katya, and I'm sure there are crumbs all over my face from the shortbread cookies I had been scarfing down while she had been talking. It's been a really good interview, and I'm pleased with the rapport we've established. I rise to turn off the tape recorder when Katya asks me, "How do your parents feel?" I look at her and say, "About?" She smiles and says, "About your, mixed race. Like how were you brought up?" I sit down again and say, "Let me turn off the tape and I can tell you about all my stuff." (Research diary October 17 1996)

In this section, I hope to "turn the tape recorder back on" and explain how my own identity as a multiethnic woman has complicated the material I have acquired.⁹ Although I have already described some of my own experiences of multiethnicity in chapter one, I now want to illustrate how my multiethnic identity has had an impact upon the interview process.

It has been suggested by researchers (Tizard and Phoenix 1993; Root 1992) that it is helpful when a multiethnic individual carries out the interviews with multiethnic respondents. This may diminish the discomfort some interviewees feel, as well as providing a sympathetic ear for discussion. Indeed, these experiences reflect Kobayashi's assertion that:

"political ends will be achieved only when representation is organized so that those previously disempowered are given voice. In other words, it matters that women of colour speak for and with women of colour" (Kobayashi 1994:74).

The idea of "women of colour" being researched and written about by "white" academics is one which has been critiqued in the social sciences. The majority of individuals are generally "frightened" to carry out ethnographic research about women of colour simply because they feel it is not their terrain, and "God forbid, if they do not get it right" (Bannerji 1990:23). Winchester explains that many insist that white researchers should not, despite "their best intentions"

⁹ In exploring this issue, I am also addressing Johnson's query regarding what impact multiethnicity has upon the exploration of research projects (Johnson 1994:110).

interview black people (Winchester 1996) and Suleri claims that only “insiders” have the right to representation: “only a black can speak for a black; only a postcolonial subcontinental feminist can adequately represent the lived experience of that culture” (Suleri 1995:275). Similarly, Grant confesses that:

“many lesbians, myself included, have no interest in being involved in any research on lesbians conducted by a straight woman...it is important for lesbians to present their own experiences” (Grant 1996:189).

Evidently, some feel that feminist research can only be conducted by those whose feminist consciousness comes from their personal experience. This flags for me a disturbing tendency among white feminist circles to shy away from research on “women of colour” as I have alluded to in chapter two, witnessed through a kind of guilty, “head-hanging” business of being afraid to comment for fear of critical examination and being called “politically incorrect” (Philip 1992). Many members of the academy feel uncomfortable researching issues to do with ethnicity, despite the call that we cannot afford to ignore the structures of power between women (Chouinard and Grant 1996). These concerns have led to an abandoning of particular research projects (Staehli and Lawson 1994; England 1994). This raises issues of responsibility and commitment: as Goetz states: “[W]e cannot replace the question “What must be done?” with “Who am I?” , or with the retreating statement, “I cannot claim to know, and so can do nothing” (Goetz 1991:134). Who, then, are deemed to be the most authentic “insiders” and is there any way of guaranteeing an “authentic” experience? I sense a particular dualistic conception of the relationship between the researcher and researched in these statements. The relationship between the researcher and the researched is constructed as either a relationship of sameness, where both are in the same position, or an objectifying distance (Rose 1997b:313). Song and Parker (1995) insist that the literature on ethical and social research has stressed differences between the researcher and researched instead of focusing upon shared similarities, citing that ethnographic studies have been premised upon the “notion of difference” between the researcher and researched, where the researcher is positioned “outside” the field. Much sociological discussion has examined the multiple implications of occupying either an “insider” or “outsider” position (Merton 1972). However, given my own multiplicitous positioning as a supposed “insider” - a woman of multiethnicity - and as an “outsider” as well - an academic working in

television - these arguments seemed to jar for me. What really constitutes an insider/outsider position in feminist research? How does one create an "insider" positioning? Is it solely based upon gender or ethnic differences between the subject and the researcher? To understand the research process as one where the researcher is positioned on the outside or on the inside seems problematic, especially in the case of my own research. I was neither an insider nor an outsider, I was both, and neither, continually. Certainly in terms of ethnicity, I was never the exact same ethnic makeup as any one woman I studied - even though I was primarily studying women of multiethnicity. In any case, shared ethnicity does not necessarily entail congruity of interests. These complex positionings are accompanied by a myriad series of relationships of power, none of which are easy to map.

On one hand, there were times when my own status as a multiethnic women did foster dialogue. Certainly, I did share commonalities and similar experiences with the women I interviewed which was reflected through our exuberant discussions. At times during the interview process, I discovered that my own multiethnic identity may have helped diminish the fears of participants who were wary of my reasons for carrying out this study. I became very familiar with the phrase, "Oh, you're mixed *too*? Oh well, then I'll *definitely* be interviewed!" During a pivotal point in our interview, Kiirti explained to me how she felt comfortable talking to me as a woman of multiethnicity:

You see that's the sort of thing, that I don't necessarily think that I would be able to describe to somebody who wasn't, and I'm going to say it again, I mean you need it for description's sake, but who wasn't of mixed race. I don't think they'd really get it.

However, at the same time, I was well aware that my own identification as a woman of multiethnicity created a new set of tensions, definitions and fields of insiders and outsiders to emerge (Nast 1994). For example, peppered through many interviews emerged the phrase, "You know what I mean, Minelle" followed by a knowing glance or smile. This sort of shared complicity may have created a more comfortable space for these women to tell their stories - but also prevented them from divulging further detail, given that they simply thought that I "understood" what they were *not* saying. As well, participants may well have thought that I was expecting specific sorts of answers to my questions to coincide with my own hypothesis, carved

from my own realm of experience. Hence, there needed to be a critical and reflexive questioning on my part during all stages of research to consider and re-consider again what it was that I was trying to accomplish, as well as continually contemplating my own politics of positionality throughout. I tried to remain alert as I reminded myself of my own interests in “colouring” data. I hoped to promote mutual respect and identification of commonalities and differences between researcher and researched. By listening, contextualizing, and admitting to the power I bring to bear as a multiply positioned researcher (female, multiethnic, academic, CBC television researcher), I became well aware that reflexivity needed to be employed throughout the processes of locating, reaching out to, and working within this particular field.

I do, however, want to illustrate how the presumption of shared multiethnicity insinuates a single constituency. Feminist geographers have pointed out (McDowell 1993a) that there is no single analytical category of “woman”, and so it also follows that the category of “mixed race” or “multiethnic” tends to obscure the disparate heterogeneous diversity within that label. It seems to be a given that because I am multiethnic, I would indeed share some deep commonality with the women I interviewed. However, this assertion assumes a core basis of unity. It is important to question the expectation for “mutual recognition” among these women who have very different life experiences and who held very different, often opposing, perspectives. Light skin privilege and class status, among other factors, also can form important bases for the evolution of differences and of political mobilization in some instances. Indeed, I did not “see myself” in all the stories told. At times, the experiences of some of the women were markedly dissimilar from my own experience of multiethnicity. I worked to comprehend the ways they made sense of their lives and the particular ways they went about describing their experiences.

Different women are affected by various forms of oppression. Indeed, these women experienced very different kinds of racism based upon decisions made regarding their phenotypes. Some of the women experienced racism on a day-to-day basis; others, not at all because of white skin privilege and class standing, among other factors. By insisting upon the similarities among all multiethnic women, we are focusing upon “notions of fixed identities which are based upon readily identifiable and socially recognized points of difference” (Song and Parker 1995:249).

In his critique of his own interviewing process, Parker emphasizes that:

"So many dimensions of sameness and difference can be operating at any given moment. And where two people may claim commonality on one dimension, they may fall apart on another"(Song and Parker 1995:246)

It is imperative not to erroneously assume that all multiethnic women are "sisters; having "unified subjectivities of shared consciousness through gender" (Gilbert 1994:92). I was separated from many of the women I interviewed through a variety of social cleavages which structure life worlds, like life partner choices, whether or not they were gay or straight, political activists, culture vultures, their ages, whether they were adopted or not adopted, outgoing or shy, childless or a mother among countless other salient divisions. I shared many subject positionings with informants, and only one of these axes was my own multiethnicity. As Johnson puts it, "when considering positionality and the power that accompanies some situations...gender...ethnicity and race are only some of the structuring elements" (Johnson 1994:110). Indeed, some of us had gone to the same college, had the same friends, and shared similar interests, and it was through the basis of these dimensions of similarity that I was often granted legitimization, leading to extensive dialogue. I would like to share one aspect of belonging which emerged among participants, the axes of which was neither gender nor ethnicity, but rather, our joint participation in the media.

My television identity problematizing the insider/outsider divide I have spent the last two years employed as a Canadian Broadcasting Corporation television news researcher. As such, I conducted at least three interviews a day (mostly by phone, but some in person) in order to book guests and prepare hosts for a daily news/current affairs programme. Without a doubt, my status as a CBC news researcher and the news angle that I developed (along with the training courses I took towards improving my news interviewing skills) has had a profound effect on the ways in which I conducted these interviews, particularly in that interviewing women for this study made me confront issues of my own personality and professional training. Unlike my colleagues in academe, I have had extensive experience in approaching unknown people, either in person or by telephone, in order to ask them for their time, to share an experience, a tale or tell "their story". Normally, however, no-one will agree to a television interview unless they have an opportunity to gain something - either a rise in popularity or political recognition - simply because they cannot entirely trust that their time or their words will be treated with respect. My

own complicit positioning as a television journalist plays a role in the acquisition of data. I was read as a “professional” journalist by some of the participants in this study, which lent me a credence I was not prepared for. Some of the younger interviewees would ask me anxiously afterwards for tips on how to get into journalism, echoing Oakley’s experience where she was asked literally hundreds of questions by her interviewees for information and advice (Oakley 1986).

On the other hand, many of the women I did end up interviewing worked in media in some fashion, and many of our conversations reflected our joint interest in this profession where an alliance was temporarily forged based neither upon the social cleavages of ethnicity nor gender, but our experiences in media as an excerpt from my research diary will readily attest:

I am sitting in the board room at the CBC with Emma, where after several attempts, we’re finally meeting to conduct this interview. Emma works in the Live Specials unit at the CBC and as such, it’s rare that she knows what her days are like - last time we scheduled, the premier announced a live press conference that day and we had to cancel. But finally, we’ve managed to find a spare moment to conduct the interview. Emma and I have worked together very sparingly in the past-I might have handed a tape to her or called her about a special. But we’ve never actually talked. Now, we’re half-way through the interview, and she says to me, “You know, I really think mixed race women occupy a postmodern space.” I look at her and smile to myself, thinking excitedly, “Oh my God-there’s the clip!”-the sound bite I’m always searching for when conducting my TV interviews. Almost as if reading my mind, Emma grins and says, “Isn’t that a great clip?” We both laugh, as if conspiring together (Research diary, August 5 1996)

Emma and I shared a moment through our similar experiences at the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, where in our workplace we are constantly searching for what we call “the perfect clip”. This may have had an impact upon what Emma chose to reveal during the course of the interview. She no doubt wanted to give “good interview” and this desire may have coloured the acquisition of the data I received. Clearly, the motivations behind the desire to create shared commonalities among women are diverse. In these situations, I felt I developed a keen rapport with participants based upon our joint interest in the media, rather than upon the more socially prevalent axes of gender or ethnicity. My concerns in devising my methodology reflected my desire to destabilize what might be read as a the development of yet another essentialized category based upon the divides of gender and ethnicity. Obviously, however, at the same time

I was very concerned about the lack of research conducted on multiethnic women in Canada. In order to bridge this chasm, I hoped to stress the importance of acknowledging and working through differences among women so that categories were resisted, in turn opening possibilities for alliances that cross-cut current definitions of race.

In this section, I have endeavoured to illustrate the problematic nature of assuming that research on women of colour must be carried out by women of colour. I remain concerned that many feminists are daunted by the thought of pursuing studies on women of colour for fear of adopting a less than reflexive approach. I believe good feminist research can explore these spaces and the ways in which they are produced simultaneously with other attributes of social identity - like age, location, and personality (WGSG 1997). I would suggest, like Sibley, that if geography is going to represent difference authentically and challenge exclusionary tendencies, "practitioners need to transgress disciplinary and personal boundaries and to come much closer to the people who... provide the primary justification for the existence of the subject" (Sibley 1995:185). This would include challenging the assumptions and stereotypes we bring to the field as feminist researchers and taking risks while adopting a continually reflexive approach to research.

The binary paradox of oppression and resistance

"Oppressed people resist by identifying themselves as subjects, by defining their reality, shaping their new identity, naming their history, telling their story" (hooks 1989:43)

I have problematized the notion of an "insider/outsider" stance inherent in the research process. In order to disrupt another dualistic positioning, I now show how the feminist research process has been characterized as either oppressive or emancipatory. Both representations are exaggerated. Instead, I argue that we need to map out new "landscapes of power" (Rose 1997b) taking place during the research process. Feminist researchers, including myself, like to believe that our work is emancipatory. Michelle Fine (1997b) emphasizes that feminist research offers a critique from the margins, where multiple positionings are valued and destabilized, challenging the perceptions of the dominant. Current research in cultural geography also attempts the same, as Sibley observes: "I see the question of making human geography radical and emancipatory partly as a question of getting close to other people, listening to them, making way for them" (Sibley 1995:184). Chouinard and Grant (1996:171) exclaim that it is "high time for all

geographers to do what they can to ensure that “other” voices and practices are taken seriously in struggles to reconstruct “the project”. Similarly, I have been told by several feminist researchers how “important” my work is because it attempts to produce an alternative discourse about women - for women. Indeed, many women who agreed to be interviewed insisted their purpose was to disrupt the prevailing social viewpoint that people of multiethnicity experience emotional difficulty and subsequently suffer due to their apparently conflicted racial identity. Feminists have traditionally positioned women as oppressed and dominated, and following that logic, women of multiethnicity occupy an ironically privileged place by being further marginalized within the broader margins, or triply subordinated as women, women of colour, and then as “mixed race” women (Barrath 1995). Research on multiethnic individuals has situated them within a dualistic conception of their identity. In very broad terms, the research tends to position the voices of multiethnic people as either oppressed and deviant, turning them into victims with little control over their lives without sensing the possibility of human agency, or else the media tends to completely contradict that positioning, emphasizing the voices of individuals who insist that they experience “the best of both worlds” (Funderburg 1994). These characterizations seem to construct very limited, one-dimensional identities with negative undertones. As such, I was congratulated on my desires to pursue a topic which would “undoubtedly” contradict the existing stereotypes about multiethnic individuals. These calls may reflect a somewhat disingenuous agenda. These statements addresses issues of access and our powerful influence upon the acquisition of material, and the choices we make in reconstructing narratives. Within this characterization, I am positioned as a liberator of voices, while the women I interviewed are seen as submerged. I experience great unease around this positioning. While I believe it is important to bring the voices of multiethnic women to the forefront, I also want to acknowledge the potentially disturbing positioning of these women as “oppressed” and my own role in “freeing” their discourses. There is a social construction of the research subject as oppressed others, an inescapable positioning which is compounded during the research process, where interviewees as seen as subordinate, and extracting information is seen to be more valid than actually divulging it (Oakley 1981:39). This represents, as Oakley points out, a rationalization of equality. It makes sweeping generalizations about the nature of the interview process as well as the interview subject themselves. It is important to unravel the politics of research inherent in the myth that research on women is always politically empowering (Gibson-

Graham 1996) because certainly at times it is not. It may in fact obscure the development of yet another hierarchy between the researcher and researched, the chasm widening as we construe the “researched subject” as an abject population, rather than personal experts living in the multiethnic community.

These characterizations reveal a dualistic conception of the power dynamics inherent in the research process, effectively obscuring the potential of the wealth of experiences and power dynamics continually fluctuating between the researcher and researched during the interview procedure. Rose (1997b) illustrates the particular divide characterizing the “transparent reflexivity” of the feminist research process, where the researcher looks “inward” to the identity of the researcher (asking what kinds of baggage the researcher brings to her work “in the field”) on one side, and on the other, where the researcher looks “outward” to her relation to her research and what is described as “the outer world” (Rose 1997b:309). In critiquing the notion of reflexivity, Rose suggests that feminist geographers are plotting a very two-dimensional map of the relations of power between the researched and researched, where “power relations are [charted] into a visibly and *clearly ordered* space that can be surveyed by the researcher: power becomes seen as a sort of landscape” (my emphasis, Rose 1997b:310). Differences between the researcher and researched, she argues, are imagined as distances in a landscape of power. Like Rose, I believe the power dynamics among the researcher and researched are far messier than may be previously conceptualized.

Any interaction or exchange between two people is a loaded one, where minute choices are being made continually about what to reveal. These decisions are based upon momentary reflections upon the situation by each individual present. However, these dynamics, while almost impossible not to recognize, are difficult to cite in detail. I prefer to see the interview as an encounter of several social choices embedded in the social world, echoing a vision of research as process of constitutive negotiation based upon Butler’s notion of performativity (1993a) where researcher and researched are envisioned as “interactive” (Miles and Crush 1993). I duly and complexly performed my story as an interviewer and as a multiethnic woman, just as the women I interviewed were charged with the task of telling their stories and making meaning, thus providing and producing a particular performance in space around their experience of

multiethnicity. These narratives ought to be envisioned as the product of a personal exchange of information, merely a snapshot of the place-specific context process of resistance, oppression, and the play of differences within that site at that particular time.

In my attempt to redress power balances, (where I was read as the “powerful” one and interviewees were left positioned as “powerless” in the process) I tried to develop a methodology which would take into consideration that power is everywhere, inscribed by both myself and the interviewee. Power dynamics between the interviewer and the interviewed must be rethought as an already existing political process (Gibson-Graham 1996). My experience of the interview process may offer a way to remap power outside of a binary positioning within the research practice. Given that I experienced both the role of an insider and outsider continually, I began to see the possibility of promoting alternative subject positions for gendered subjects. Identity and subjectivity were continually being devised and crafted, and through that process, new sites of power and places of political intervention were being constituted.

I did not want to degrade, control or pathologize the participants’ voices by contributing towards either/or subject positions. Thus my methodology proposal attempted to reflect my desire to provide a space for participants to narrate their lives in a way which would allow them to speak, rather than locking their voices within the already existing representations about their existence. As Chouinard and Grant (1996:171) note: “[it is important to draw] on these vantage points in revolutionary ways which challenge and disrupt our understanding of processes of exploitation and oppression”. I wanted to ask what strategies would enable these sorts of stories to unfold during the interview process, how I could facilitate a comfortable setting by reading these women’s voices as important contributors without conceptualizing them as “othered” or marginalized. It was then that I conceived of the notion of dialoguing as an inherent part of my research process, where I attempted to disrupt that hierarchy by engaging in momentary conversations. I believe that the process of dialoguing may provide a serious challenge posed by the discourse on difference to feminist geographical research. I will now discuss this concept in further detail.

Dialoguing and swapping stories - the complex politics of my own disclosure Qualitative research is concerned with the interpretation of discourses and actions in an attempt to provide

nuanced accounts and explanations of the research subject's experiences. Feminist methodologies have urged us to carefully contextualize these experiences so that we focus our attention toward how interpretations arise from particular situations and not simply "read off" from the accounts of research subjects (WGSG 1997). As well, feminist methodologies have emphasized the importance of maintaining reflexivity so that the politics and ethics of the research practice are problematized (Rose 1997c). Their critiques reveal important theoretical consequences for the characterization of the interview process. Although feminists have called for an insistence upon the reflexivity of the interviewer, these positions do not dislodge the assumption that the best interview is the objective interview. The traditional "objective" style of interviewing has been characterized as follows:

"He or she should assume an interested manner toward the respondent's opinions and never divulge his or her own. If the interviewer should be asked for personal views, he or she should laugh off the request with the remark that the job at the moment is to get opinions, not to have them" (Sellitz *et al.* 1959 in Winchester 1996:123).

In this situation, the interviewer receives, but refuses to give, personal information. On one hand, I found myself wanting to desperately follow Sjoberg and Nett's golden guidelines: "Never provide the interviewee with any formal indication of the interviewer's beliefs and values. If the informant poses a question...parry it" (Sjoberg and Nett 1968:212). This reflects my training that to behave otherwise is to "taint" the data we receive.

Initially, I would finish an interview, and begin to worry. Did I interject too much? Perhaps I shouldn't have told that story...maybe I revealed too much. In fact, these concerns reflect my own valorization of what "a proper interview" should be, based upon positivistic characterizations of the methodological research process. By still referring to the objective interview as the "right way" of interviewing, I would argue that we have not yet developed ways to transcend the questions raised by the dual role of the researcher who can often occupy simultaneously an insider/outsider position. Feminist methodologies have yet to fully incorporate a multi-layered model of the many different positionings of the interviewer. The political and ethnical implications of the arguments advanced in chapter two can be most clearly grasped as an attempt to fracture the vicious circle between speakers and the spoken for, drawing upon Chambers' claim:

"In breaking into my own body of speech, opening up the gaps and listening to the silences in my own inheritance, I perhaps learn to tread lightly along the limits of where I am speaking from. I begin to comprehend that where there are limits there also exist other voices, bodies, worlds, on the other side, beyond my particular boundaries" (Chambers 1994:5).

The emphasis placed upon the importance of the "objective interview" reflects the masculinist, positivistic approach of the interview as a research tool in the social sciences which has been heavily critiqued by Oakley (1981). She insists that "sociology mirrors society in not looking at social interaction from the viewpoint of women" (Oakley 1981:40). In order to further develop methodologies which reflect "womens' ways of knowing", I want to discuss the style of interview which I entered into with my interviewees which was characterized by momentary conversation and shared stories, a process I have entitled "dialoguing". I engaged in this process in order to promote a new framing of the role of the researcher and develop a more accurate depiction of a multi-tiered interview process. Instead of focusing upon the insider/outsider status of the researcher, I want to suggest that the researcher can enter into momentary dialogue with the researched without feeling guilty or "tainting" data. This style of "dialoguing" can unearth material that the researcher may not have anticipated through a revealing of his/her own positioning. Obviously, this means that the transcripts reflect more of a mutually constituted negotiation between the researcher and the interviewee, echoing Plummer's assertion (1995) that we move away from the interviewer's dominant interests of envisaging personal narratives as texts, awaiting insightful analysis. Instead, Plummer suggests that we read the production of these narratives as social actions embedded in social worlds, where both the interviewer and the interviewee contribute to the discussion, allowing for clarification of ideas. Winchester concurs, insisting that "the empathetic mode indicates that the interviewer should attempt to make the interview a two-way flow, and in doing so should give something back" (Winchester 1996:124). Although I initially planned to engage in one-way interviews with women of multiethnicity, I soon discovered that the process took on less of a question-answer format and more the form of an exchange during moments in the interview. While part of me was concerned with retaining an objective stance, I found it difficult to do so. I felt some responsibility to discuss my own multiethnic experiences with these women, given the seeming "therapeutic" atmosphere I was creating for them to divulge these deeply personal stories. Confiding such personal matters established a level of personal involvement which I didn't want to simply ignore. I found myself

engaged in conversation at points during the interview simply because I wanted to establish a rapport between the interviewer and respondent. In many ways, the interviews felt like twenty-four blind dates. I hated seeing my interviewee ill at ease and wanted to reassure her, especially since I likened the interview process to an emotional rape given the intensely personal experiences which are revealed. During some of the interviews, the women I interviewed would become increasingly emotional, and even shed a tear or two. I refused to sit silent during these sessions. It felt false, unreal and unfair to ignore the questions posed to me during the interview and I feel now that it contributed to a more relaxed and candid interview experience. I tended to fall back upon traditionally "feminine" traits in order to do what I read as facilitate the interview process, as I entered into a very conversational style of interview.¹⁰ I had a bag of stories which I could pull out at moments of silence which came up, bubbling to the surface, giving the opportunity for the interviewee to take a break from constant talking. I knew that at times, she wasn't listening to me, but was taking a breather. I learned quickly that stories bred stories. If I divulged a story, it would lead to one on the part of the interviewee. So I stored up a few tales of my own childhood which were used as facilitating remarks for the flow of the interviewee's thoughts to continue. Experiences and opinions were shared, debated and challenged just as they are in normal conversational settings. Ideas were thrown about and swatted around. This allowed for further clarification of opinions. In the course of sharing stories, the research process revealed the construction of momentary belongings where we inadvertently explored our similarities with one another, and our differences. By entering into a conversational style of interview, meaning is produced as a dialogue between both participants during the interview process. This model offers a middle position between the researcher and researched in an attempt to become more sensitive to the ways in which social practices produce and resist power in specific contexts. I believe that the process of dialoguing may offer a way to reflect upon the experience of the research process in such a way that we recognize our own part in the dialogue is [a necessary part of this endeavour]...[providing a vocabulary] which are

¹⁰ Food figured prominently in the majority of my interviews. I normally met participants over lunch or for a coffee, and would engage in pre-interview banter with them over the pie-filled glass counter, where we would both agonize over various choices of pastries. This seemingly idle chatter served a myriad of purposes, but most prominently offered us both a chance to "suss each other out"-to get a sense of the other outside of the constrained interview material. Moments between bites offered the participant a chance to reflect upon her previous statement, to provide an opportunity to think of what to say next, without there being an awkward social silence. Eating relieves some of that social dis-ease and put the interviewee at ease so that she could speak more freely.

helpful in getting to grips with difference" (Sibley 1995:186). In order to illustrate how this process of dialoguing occurred, I want to cite a fairly long passage from one of my interviews with Makeda, where we lapsed into dialogue during one section of the interview:

Makeda: So where were we? Oh yes, I was dissing my ex-boyfriend!

Minelle: But you're so good at it! (shared laughter) It's just funny to hear you talk, in some ways, so much of what you talk about, is stuff that comes up for me. About whiteness. I mean I've felt similarly about not dating white men anymore, and then I go and date another white man!

Makeda: Yeah, especially if you declare a moratorium! (shared laughter)

Minelle: And it's so ironic, and I know I'm lying. I don't think desire works that way. I don't think you can limit it, as much as you try.

Makeda: No, you're right, you might find yourself in a situation where, which doesn't transcend race, but might bring you closer in a way? That you haven't found with other people? This relationship I have with people who I've been close to, on an intellectual basis? Like in terms of school, and mentors, and like, that whole thing is really complicated to me, too. Like who I think of being a voice of knowledge. You know? So that to me has been a big issue, like where is knowledge? And these aren't new questions, like Dr. [X] and her work has talked about. She's talked about being a professor...that's another interesting thing. Is when you find out there's a time when women of colour who have been prominent, and you find out, "Oh, but she's with a white man!" You know? Like I remember hearing that about her, and it's like, "Oh she's with a white man..."

Minelle: I know, it's like how can she preach all this while at home, she's in her personal life!

Makeda: I KNOW! And a lot of people have said that about people at school, too. Like [X], or whatever. It's so funny!

Minelle: In terms of battling their own demons, and then they have all these people talking about them behind their backs! I mean, I don't know her all too well. But...

Makeda: [X] is interesting, because she's interested in questions about mixed race identity. And she's kinda, she has two kids, and is interested. And she wants to know, or whatever. It's interesting. I think sometimes, what frustrates me is that I'm the only person who ever thinks about these things in relation to this desire? But it's not true, when I'm around YOU, or whoever, they are completely normal questions to be asking? Or just ah, and it cuts both ways, the idea of wanting to be, liked and loved for our difference, and not be, and at the same time not to have that difference to be made absolute? But that it somehow, is a clearly defining, quality?

In this exchange, Makeda and I are developing a rapport based upon shared experiences. This was not a fabrication - I truly felt a kinship with Makeda at that moment and wanted to share my

enthusiasm with her. While some may read my interjections as leading, I instead want to suggest that in fact it provides a way to clarify what the thoughts of the interviewee. In this situation, Makeda elucidated upon the notion of transcending racial divides. This resulted, for me, in the acquisition of very rich information. We then embarked upon another shared axes - our joint impressions of professors at college - at which point Makeda extended that it seemed "perfectly natural, in her words, to talk about these issues (of race and power and prestige) with me. I think that the process of dialoguing facilitated her comfort level during the interview process, just as it facilitated my own comfort level, which should not be overlooked. Although one might read my interjections as a way of "tainting" data, I suggest that in fact, this exchange is much more natural than remaining mute. I agree with Oakley (1981) that contamination happens on multiple levels: to remain silent is to also offer an interjection which could be read on several planes by the interviewee. My own silence during an interview would still play a major part in the association between the interviewee and researcher. Even the most basic "yes" - a simple utterance - is inherently laden with all sorts of powerful meanings because of its extraverbal content. Any exchange between two people - regardless of an interview or a dialogue - provides an immensely complex context in which meaning is produced and contested. Rather than work against this by accentuating the differences between the researcher and researched, I chose to focus upon our shared similarities through dialoguing with the interviewee.

It is virtually impossible to carry out an objective interview. Any exchange is a loaded one as every communication establishes a relationship between individuals. By continuing to insist upon our own "unbiased" status, or assuming we can adopt this stance, we are in fact ignoring the very real baggage we bring to each interview. By attempting to veil these experiences, I create a situation which is highly artificial, heightening the tensions between the researcher and interviewee. In our day-to-day interactions, we rarely engage in pointed, one-way dialogue, and given the intensely personal nature of these interviews, I found it difficult, and unfair, to stay silent. Conversation is a metaphor which is not often utilized in feminist research (although see Gibson-Graham 1994 and Longhurst 1996) but I would contend that it is a very valuable one. My own significant contributions during the interview often meant that we were no longer participating in a dualistic relationship where I asked questions and kept mute while the interviewee provided the vital information. Rather, by making interjections, much like a

conversation, the interactional dynamics continued to shift, continually being recreated. Engaging in conversations during the interview process may "produce alternative discourses that entail new subject positionings, supplementing or supplanting those that currently exist" (Gibson-Graham 1996:241). Revealing stories about myself destabilized the (already shifting) power dynamics during the interview, "enabling novel performances" (ibid). However, it is imperative to note that my own insertions during the interview need to be examined as they most definitely had lingering effects upon the material I acquired.

3.4 ANALYSIS

"To choose an attitude towards interpretation...these days is to choose more than just an attitude: it is to choose a politics of reading, it is to choose an ethics of reading" (Jardine in Awkward 1995:22)

At the end of the interview process, I was left with over fifty 90-minute tapes. All of the interviews were fully transcribed. While transcribing I often made quick scribbles in my notebook regarding the meaning of certain statements or exchanges in my attempt to build up a complex portrait of the subject matter. I also kept a research diary. After transcription,¹¹ each interview turned out to be anywhere from 40 to 100 pages long. It was difficult trying to find a way to analyse the material. I chose not to use "Ethnograph" or other social scientist statistics packages as I was more interested in the subtleties and nuances which a statistical analysis programme might not pick up on (Hinchcliffe *et al.* 1997). Although there has been a call on the part of feminist geographers for new methods of qualitative analysis (Nast 1994) this call has not yet been matched by explicit references to actual methods of feminist geographical analysis of open-ended interviews. I began my own process of developing an interpretative analysis after consulting several texts specializing in qualitative analysis (Strauss 1987). I focused on the process of "mind mapping" (see Collins 1996 and Kneale 1995 for examples) in order to explore the rich material available in the transcripts.

¹¹ Citations from all interviews were edited only for clarity. Habits of speech such as the arbitrary "um", the (not deliberately rhetorical) "you know" and the very Canadian "like" were noted in order not to destroy the temporal narrative and the dynamic context of utterances. At other times, they were deleted after transcription to make for easier reading among British audiences. I have placed some phrases in upper caps when participants emphasized certain words.

"My" women: choosing a style of analysis

I am sitting in a cafe with another geographer, gesturing wildly with my hands, enthusiastically discussing my latest interview. "You should SEE the great material I got out of this one..." I say, taking a quick sip of my coffee. "I mean, I am so proud of my women, giving me such great interview clips..." My friend sits silent, and stares at me, motionless for a moment. He then says, "You know you just called them "your" women, right?" (Research diary February 15 1997)

"I've heard researchers in southeast Asia, for example, using the possessive "my" when referring to people of the region, as if they were their academic property." (Sibley 1995:137).

I found myself both possessive and envious of many of the women I interviewed. While being amazed at what I read were brilliant insights being offered, I was often taken aback with fear, knowing I had the arduous task of interpreting the "most valuable" data available in those personal narratives. I began to doubt my ability to cull the most salient points, and thought that many of the women I interviewed could do a better job of salvaging these tales for the "best" material. Oakley too argues this in her own research, admitting that "the women could say it all much better than she could" (Oakley in Winchester 1996:125). However, Oakley points out that in our zeal to let "women speak for themselves", we might actually be ducking out of analysis. It is important to note that I made some important political and ethical choices about the material, and even the choice to let the texts "speak for themselves" represents a choice on the part of the interviewer. In the end, I decided upon the process of mind-mapping as a method to code the interviews.

Mind mapping as a way of coding interviews Although the interviews were open-ended, my questions provided a "road map" of direction for each interview. The structure inherent in the interview process provided a useful starting point for tabulating the material. Firstly, I read over each interview a few times to get a very broad sense of the recurring themes. After all interviews had been read over, a few general themes began to emerge which were indexed onto one sheet of bristol board to provide an overview of all themes.

The next major task included setting up a general "map" on which to position the particular themes which emerged during each interview. Obviously, this involved a very close reading of

each interview. For the first interview that I mapped, I discerned the following themes which emerged from my direct questioning:

- * childhood geographies**
- * family**
- * friends**
- * partners**
- * responses to the question "Where are you from?"**
- * appearance**
- * narratives which focused upon Canadianness**
- * anecdotes**

However, as I began to map out the first few interviews based upon these general headings, I slowly discerned that there was a great deal of material which I was missing out on. As a result, I started to add certain themes I had missed out on in my initial scan of the interviews which included:

- * having to prove your ethnicity**
- *discourses on whiteness**
- *feeling out of place or experiencing frustration at a lack of vocabulary to discuss feeling out of place**
- *moving through race with a specific emphasis upon turning points: when issues of race became less or more salient**
- *narratives which focused upon the interviewee's own racist tendencies, seeming paradoxical or conflictual statements which contradicted the interviewees' previous narrative**
- *forming other belongings-where the interviewee discussed how she bonded with people or how she creates her own homes**
- *concerns about the development of a "mixed race community"**
- *situated ethnicities which focused upon how the interviewee describes and experiences her ethnicity in different places**

I also felt it was important to take notes about my own complex participation in the interview process, so I portioned off a section of the bristol board and entitled it "Me" for any interjections on my part which included my own stories. Each one of these headings took up a certain place on the sheet of bristol board - for example, narratives about appearance were catalogued by line number in the top right of the sheet of paper, whereas narratives focusing on childhood geographies were designated in the top left corner. This made for easy comparison of themes between interviews and also provided a visual sense of what themes were important for different interviews. Comments on any one particular theme scattered throughout each interview were clearly mapped onto the sheet of paper, making it easy to identify by its individual line number.

The benefits of this sort of analysis proved to be enormous for my purposes. Most importantly, it unveiled how participants talked less about certain themes and much more about others. For example, even after completing the interviews, I was certain that each interview contained a great deal about appearance, perhaps because a large section of my interview asked at least five questions about the topic. However, after completing all the mind maps, it became abundantly clear that although the women did discuss their feelings about their appearance, it was only a small part of the story. It rarely took up more than a few inches on my sheet of bristol board. In contrast, when I discerned a great deal of discussion about the ways in which these women create their own sense of home, I often had to tack on extra paper to the bristol board, as the dialogues on this subject were lengthy and fascinating. Also surprising to me was the limited dialogue about families. These women chose not to speak about their familial relationships in great detail which again reflexively requires another look at my interview questions. Other unanticipated discoveries included extensive dialogue on what it means to be white. The interviews were transfused with an energy about these womens' political and personal¹² choices, how they positioned their ethnic identities, and instead of focusing upon the kinds of oppression and racism they had experienced, there was an accented emphasis upon how these forms of

¹² It will become clear in the empirical analysis that follows that I have chosen not to discuss in great detail participants' choices in partners, although the section of transcript from my interview with Makeda perhaps hints that this was a prevalent point of discussion. Indeed, ethnographic data on the choices multiethnic women make regarding their partners is sparse (Root 1997:168). However, despite this paucity of information, I felt unveiling these womens' intensely personal stories about their sexual preferences in the thesis created far too great an intrusion into their personal lives. I was grateful for the material that I did gather, and wanted to respect their confidentiality in some regard.

oppression were transcended, illustrating the joys of being mixed. This radically contradicted the early empirical analyses on multiethnic identity and I often left my interviews feeling elated, magically transformed. There are several advantages to the mind mapping process. Firstly, it removed several digressions from each interview text, which included talk about recipes, favourite hair salons, and superfluous material (although it can be argued that no material during the interview is superfluous!) It also provided a clear "table of contents" to each interview. By mapping repeated subject arenas, I could discern common themes among interviews, linking ideas between them. I also drew lines to connect specific themes together: for example, "forming other belongings" often connected with "concerns about the mixed race community" as participants would emphasize their comfort with other mixed individuals but insist upon pointing out their comfort levels with other marginalized groups as well.

The mind mapping process provides a less linear, and more multi-dimensional approach to "reading" the interview material. It is a technique which successfully accommodates texts in a visual format. Suddenly, the entire transcript of each interview became accessible immediately without having to shuffle through several hundred sheets of paper simply to find "that quote." It provides an index to each interview transcript, and constitutes the analysis in important ways as it records how each individual participant makes sense of her world. Links between ideas and actions are visually recorded on the page. For me, it clearly pointed not only what was said, but what wasn't said...as I have already mentioned, much to my astonishment, very few women talked about their appearance in great detail. Finally, while I am the first to admit that the physical act of actually sitting down and "mapping" an interview in this fashion is tedious, exhausting, and draining, it also demands a meticulous reading of each interview, as each map takes at least ten hours to complete. It not only requires a constant reflexive analysis, but encourages creative thinking about the ways themes work together. During the mind-mapping process, I would always keep a notebook beside me in which I would scrawl reflections about particular themes. By the time I had finished mind mapping all my interviews, my notebook was full of my jottings, some of which proved useful in the development of the empirical analysis later. The point of the mind mapping exercise is to focus upon the major themes which the interviewee discusses, rather than allowing the coder to decide what are the most tangible points. In this way, I hoped to allow for the opportunity for participants to speak for themselves, rather

than having the interview speak for them. It provides a way for the interview to be understood featuring all its "gorgeous incongruities" (Domosh 1998) and constant inconsistencies. Just like any coding process, the mind mapping analysis technique is flawed. Obviously someone else might pick up an interview and discern that other themes were more salient. I continually tried to avoid this possibility by trying to stay reflexive at all times over the course of mapping all the interviews. Finally, it should be noted that at no time during the process was the mind map seen as a substitute for the actual transcript. I constantly referred back to transcripts so as not to lose the key threads connecting themes (although I continued to draw connecting lines between these themes on my map). Just as the narrative refuse to be seen as a coherent whole, neither should our analyses and readings of the transcripts. Hence, we cannot see these life portraits as fixed. The stories must be retextualized and re-envisioned and dissolved of any particular metanarrative reading.

3.5 CONCLUSION

"I can't re-present him, complete his history, dreams and passions. That would merely close the circle in a distorted mirror of my self...I can't represent him...but even if I fragmented him and re-presented him in these splinters that is still not quite the point. He has his own story" (Chambers 1994:13)

"Whatever else a story is, it is not simply the lived life" (Plummer 1995:168)

I am at home, eating macaroni and cheese in the company of my best friend from work. She's always been interested in my interviews and asks me how my interview with Emma has gone. Taking a sip of red wine, I reflect for a moment before I answer the question. My friend knows Emma intimately on both a personal and professional level, but I'm well aware that the interview is confidential. I say guardedly, "Well, she told me a lot about her Dad in Malaysia", thinking that wasn't divulging a great deal. Anita looks at me strangely. "That's odd. Her Dad died a year ago. Did she tell you that?" I'm stunned because Emma referred to her father all the way through the interview as if he was still alive. I change the subject, but my mind is whirring. Just how much did Emma tell me, and did she in fact keep other important details from me knowing that I am her work colleague and she wants to guard her privacy? (Research diary October 12 1996)

I want to mark the very real dangers of attributing an absolute value to the acquired transcripts. I do not want to suggest that the story is all that there is - the telling and reading of the narratives is always grounded in particular social processes that go "beyond the stories". These interviews reveal the limitations of acquiring the story - certain reflections can only be told at particular social moments and I insist that my own participation in these interviews played a very large role

in the acquiring of data where I performed the multiple parts of coxer, confessor and compassionate friend. These stories do not begin to capture the ways in which the body narrates data - and "we don't yet have the language to talk about that" (Fine 1997b). This particular scenario details my concern that there is often so much that is not being expressed due to the limits and constraints of the interview process. Emma deliberately chose not to feature prominently the death of her father during the interview, choosing instead to refer to him as if he were alive. Clearly, it echoes Clifford who insists: "ethnographic truths are inherently partial, committed and incomplete" (Clifford 1986:7). I have slowly come to the realization that no narratives are complete. Instead, they are always subjective, revealing some of reality, but not all. We narrate tales of our experiences in particular, partial ways, re-working them, and perhaps moving and modifying them after reflecting upon our moods, the place, the time of the interview. There is a constant process of readjusting our stories to be aligned with the very time and place, not to mention listener, of the tale. Like the diverse, active and embodied lives of the women I interviewed and their subsequent discussion of their multiple identities, we must acknowledge the multiple ways we can tell those layered stories and how our telling is altered dependent upon a variety of contexts. These narratives may be re-envisioned as reassemblings of pastiches, bits and (sound) bites reflecting an incessant playfulness within the retellings of a life story. There are multiplicitous ways of telling the story of a racialized and gendered existence and in the tellings, "a supermarket of possibilities [pervade], with endless choices available...old linear narratives break down" (Plummer 1995:139).

I see my role as a facilitator in the process of analysing and grounding the expression of a lived life. I agree with feminist geographers in their call to historicize and place stories (Anderson 1996; Chouinard and Grant 1996) within the communities where they are produced. I hope that social scientists will begin to pay far greater attentions to the shared differences we inhabit which play a role in what we tell and where we tell it. Contemporary social theorists have begun to sense the links among narrative, voice, identity, and differences (Plummer 1995). I want to underscore how these narratives express a desire to build diverse and pluralistic communities which at times ironically manage to be at radical odds with one another and yet manage to co-exist through the narratives being told. The material garnered through these extensive interviews

offered a highly complex portrait of attitudes towards multiethnicity. This material is explored in greater detail in the next four empirical chapters.

CHAPTER FOUR

Interrogating Hyphen-nation: Canadian Multicultural Policy and Multiethnic Identities

4.1 INTRODUCTION

“Canada, unhyphenated, held possible in imagination...” (Moss 1996:136)

In this first empirical chapter, I will explore how the Canadian women of multiethnicity who participated in the research contemplate the policy of multiculturalism. Canadian multicultural policy is important because it has served not only as a guideline for government policy since 1971, but also as a framework for national discourse on the construction of Canadian society. It has been argued that “multiculturalism is as Canadian a concept there is because ethnic and racial pluralism is a prime characteristic of Canada's population” (McLeod 1981:12).

I will begin by briefly exploring how multicultural policy emerged in Canada through a discussion of immigration patterns, providing a brief snapshot of the political and economic landscape at the time of the policy's conception. Secondly, I will argue that multiculturalism produces particular discursive and material social spaces within which multiethnic women imaginatively negotiate not only their multiethnic but also their national affiliations. Thirdly, I deliberately write against the claims that the notion of nation is now a “mere reminder of a vanished body” (Franco 1997:131). Instead, I argue that multiethnic women in this study re-appropriate the term “Canadian,” imagining new senses of nationalism as places for creating personal meanings among conflicting racial discourses.

It is crucial to note that the “nationalism” and “citizenship” are hotly debated terms and like the terms “black” and “white,” always open to scrutiny. There are many conflicting and complex interpretations of the notions of citizenship and nationalism, and this chapter will suggest some alternative imaginings of these notions in light of the interview material gathered. The political articulation of citizenship and nation has been contested among political scientists in Canada for decades (see Hamilton (1996) and Ng (1993) for feminist critiques). Indeed, social theorists have most significantly explored their meanings in light of constitutional and political debates, often in relation to the Canadian governments' troubled relationship between the French and English. The struggle between England and France for control over the colony has given rise to Canada's unique political configuration as a bilingual country with “deux nations” - English Canada and Quebec. However, the two nations conceptualization has successfully eclipsed the nationhood of those who are not perceived to be part of these two groups. By introducing the

opinions of participants in this study, I hope to demonstrate how the very notion of multiethnicity can unsettle the binary “deux nations” national narrative.

Instead of focusing upon the political science theorization of citizenship and nationalism, I wish to invoke a particular articulation of these phrases by focusing upon the ways in which participants contemplated their conceptualization. Indeed, participants suggest that citizenship and nation are relations that have to do with how people define themselves and how they participate in social life. In order to further develop my arguments about the various forms of agency employed among women in this study, I will suggest that citizenship and nation are terms that have to do with how people define themselves, how they participate in social life, and finally, how they forge various belongings. I hope to explore three questions in this chapter:

- *How did multicultural policy emerge in the Canadian landscape?
- * What do participants in this study make of the multicultural policy?
- *How do these women develop new reconstitutions of Canadian citizenship?

4.2 THE GENESIS OF MULTICULTURALISM

“Immigration...unwrites nation” (George 1996:186)

This section attempts to sketch out a history of the development of multicultural policy. I do so in order to deconstruct certain misrepresentations of multiculturalism where “multicultural” as an adjective is often confused with the goals and aspirations of a “multicultural project.” Often, questions of supposed factual demographic diversity are conflated with issues of potential and cultural representation. The term “multicultural” itself refers to the multiplicity of the world's cultures and the co-existence of these cultures within particular nations, in a strictly literal and indexical sense. “Multicultural as a historical adjective, then, is as banal as it is indisputable” (Stam 1997:188) because virtually all countries and regions are multicultural in some way. What distinguishes Canada beyond its status as a multicultural country, however, is that the multicultural project has been enshrined in its constitution and through law in very particular ways, reflecting a salient part of the social and political context of Canada. It is important to begin by clarifying what “ethnic” means in the context of the Canadian government policy. Although I would argue that all people in Canada are “ethnic” - as each individual has the

potential to affiliate with a particular cultural tradition in the way in which I defined "ethnic" in chapter one - the Canadian government classifies "ethnic" in a different way. The government restricts the label to immigrants, or descendants of immigrants, who are not of British or French origin (see Fleras and Elliott 1992). In this regard, First Nations people are not regarded as "ethnic minorities" because their legal status is based on a different set of principles and priorities (see Kallen 1982).

I will suggest that multicultural policy can be read as the official, legislative response in Canada to ethnic plurality, or a multicultural society. It is wise to explore some immigration patterns before tracing the development of multiculturalism as a response to particular political and economic contexts at the time (Elliott and Fleras 1990). Both demographic evidence and common sense support the assertion that Canada is a racially and culturally diverse society. Canada is a nation with a variety of ethnic and political identities as Driedger notes: "some societies have more diverse populations than others; Canada is among the most polyethnic" (Driedger 1996:2). Multiculturalism as policy emerged in part because of perceived challenges posed by the influx of ethnically diverse immigrants into Canada (Elliott and Fleras 1992). Canada was established as a dominion in 1867 through the British North America Act which inaugurated a relationship between individuals of French and British backgrounds, otherwise known as the "charter" groups (Kobayashi 1993:211). At the time of Confederation, Canada identified itself as ninety percent English or French (Ley 1984). Only eight percent of Canada's population was not of British or French origin at the time of Confederation (Kalbach 1992).

After 1881, immigration from both non-British and non-French migrants began to grow to significant numbers as the population density was dropping significantly in Canada. Chinese immigrants were recruited in order to build the Canadian Pacific Railroad. Immigrant source countries grew to include Eastern Europe and Asia (Kobayashi 1993). Between 1896-1914, up to three million immigrants, most of whom were from Central and Eastern Europe, arrived to settle in the western provinces (Elliott and Fleras 1990). Assimilation into the cultures of either of those two dominant groups has been the major objective of immigration policy at the time (Palmer 1975). The government response to this wave of immigrants is referred to as a policy of "Anglo-conformity," and its goal was to make immigrants "British" in all respects - language,

culture and ideology included (Hudson 1987).¹ In 1907, twenty percent of the immigrants entering Canada were from central and southern Europe and by 1913, this figure had reached forty-eight percent. Although immigration had been a response to national needs, the arrival of three million immigrants between 1896-1914 evoked racial tensions.² In part due to these concerns, and the subsequent pressures from Charter groups and the First Nations peoples, there was specific opposition from federal and provincial governments to immigrants from certain source countries. This led to the creation of the 1910 Canadian Immigration Act which prohibited the entry of "immigrants belonging to any race deemed unsuitable to the climate or requirements of Canada" (Malik 1996:118). The Immigration Act of 1910 set the tone for immigration until the 1960s. A class of immigrants was created that was:

"deemed undesirable because of climatic, industrial, social, educational, labour or other conditions or requirements of Canada, or because their customs, habits, modes of life and method of holding property were deemed to result in a probable inability to become readily assimilated. Selection would also be carried out on the basis of whether applicants belonged to "preferred" or "non-preferred" countries" (Malarek 1987:11)

Clearly, when confronted with legitimization crises, Canada has introduced racist policies that at various moments have either encouraged, permitted or prohibited the entry of particular ethnic

¹The term "Anglo-conformity" should not be confused with the term "melting pot". The first refers to the assimilation of newcomers into the pre-existing population, while the second refers to the fusion of various elements to create a new society, albeit cast along British lines (Berry and LaPonce 1994).

² It is critical to point out the prohibitive racist nature of immigration policies at this time. The completion of the railway in the 1880s released a large and inexpensive work force in British Columbia, and the Chinese were believed to be a threat to the jobs of white workers (Cryderman 1992). When business and labour felt threatened by competition, the government responded with discriminatory policies and anti-Chinese sentiment thrived. In the 1880s, Prime Minister Sir John. A. McDonald "subscribed to the theory that [the Chinese] were sojourners who might be rented, as one might rent a machine..." (Roy 1981:152) and Baureiss explains how in 1892, a local newspaper in Calgary proposed to its readers that "although the Chinese had a legal right to be in Canada, law-abiding citizens should implement a law to make their stay illegal, and boycott the Chinese by not giving them employment" (Baureiss 1974:3). In 1885, legislative action was taken as a "head tax" was levied upon each Chinese individual entering the country. No other group received this type of restriction. The "head tax" steadily grew from a hundred dollars in 1900 to five hundred dollars, or equivalent to a year's labour wage, in 1904 (Baureiss 1985). In 1923, due to mounting pressure, the Chinese Immigration Act, or what has become to be known as the Chinese Exclusion Act (Cryderman 1992) was passed which virtually brought Chinese immigration to a standstill. Until its repeal in 1947 (in part spurred by the fact that the Act violated the United Nations Charter of Human Rights) only forty-four new Chinese immigrants were allowed to enter the country (ibid).

groups. Canada's immigration policies were discriminatory, reflecting the internal pressures within the nation's society (Baureiss 1985).

Between the Immigration Act of 1910 and the Immigration Act of 1952, the list of preferred countries underwent some adjustments but the inherent basic discriminatory logic remained unchanged. Admittance continued to be prohibited on the basis of nationality, ethnic group, occupation or class (Hawkins 1972). This trend continued for several decades. From 1945-1962, Canada's immigration regulations were explicitly selective of Anglo Europeans and largely excluded non-Europeans. Canada has historically engaged in a tradition of recruiting immigrants from the United Kingdom, Northern Europe and the US, while restricting those from Asia and the developing world (Smith 1993). Perhaps in an attempt to divert attention from such blatantly racist policies, Canada's immigration policy of 1962 (formalized in 1967) was the first in the world to abolish all quotas or preferences on the basis of race, national origin, religion or culture. Ethnicity and country of origin were replaced by with education and training as the criteria for entry into Canada. These new criteria were set in place in order to "deracialize" the selectivity which had previously characterized the immigration programme. This supposed "race-blind" immigration policy employed a point system that established criteria based on "personal attributes". Many non-Europeans from developing nations were encouraged to come to Canada. These immigrants were largely better educated and from more urban backgrounds (Kobayashi 1993) and came from the West Indies, India, Pakistan, Uganda and elsewhere (Henry and Tator 1985). Most chose to make their homes in the larger urban centres such as Vancouver, Toronto and Montreal.

Evident at this time, therefore, were dramatic changes in the composition of ethnic diversity in the country. Between 1945-1971, the majority of immigrants arrived from Europe - over 4.3 million individuals entered the country (Elliott and Fleras 1990). For example, 282,000 Europeans immigrated in 1957. Ley (1984) outlines the major source nations of Canadian immigrants. In 1951, Britain, Germany and Italy were the top three countries of origin. By 1979, this had dramatically changed. Six out of the ten top source nations were then developing countries (Vietnam, Hong Kong, India, Laos, Philippines, and Jamaica among others). As the demographic shift quickened, the social landscape of the country, especially in the urban areas,

began to change. The increasingly visible political actions of many non-charter ethnocultural groups, like the Canadian Jewish Congress and Ukrainian Canadians, who worked to develop an "ethnic" political base (Yuzyk 1967) led to the coining of the term "third force." This referred to the sizeable portion of the population which were neither French nor British. In the light of this increased ethnic diversity, and subsequent demands for cultural protection and social equality among ethnic groups, the Canadian government began to reappraise its relationship to ethnic minorities. It established the *Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism*³ in 1962 originally in response to "growing dissatisfaction and friction between the two founding races: the English and the French" (Canada, Royal Commission 1962) without specifically setting out to explore ethnic relations in Canada. The Commission was directed to approach its task in terms of one country, two languages (English and French) and two cultures (British and French) with some vaguely defined contribution by the "others" (Hudson 1987:63). Their goal was to identify a uniquely Canadian identity (Weinfeld 1985).

The political climate in Canada at this time was marked by the awareness that ethnic independent movements were active throughout the world. Quebec was already caught up in growing nationalism. As the Commission carried out its task, it appeared to the Canadian government that "visible minorities" (a highly contestable term I will examine later in this chapter) should also have rights and government funding (Rex 1996). The Commission gradually altered its focus as it ran into hostility in the Western provinces where second, third and fourth generation Ukrainian - Canadians emphasized that they continued to be denied equal respect and opportunity because of their cultural heritage. As a result, the Commission's mandate was

³ There remains considerable debate regarding the creation of the Royal Commission. In 1962, there was already a political movement in Quebec seeking independence, and this situation indicated "the very fragile nature of Canadian Confederation at this time...thus...providing additional fuel to an already simmering issue was avoided at all costs" (Ujimoto in Bolaria 1991:138). Peter argues that the very heart of the Royal Commission Report "obscured the French Canadian challenge to political power and deflected it into linguistic and cultural directions" (Peter 1981:60). He suggests that the policy of multiculturalism has served as a device to legitimize the continued dominance of the ruling British speaking elite: to secure its position in society at a time when its position was threatened by Quebec's claim to political power, on one hand, and by the economic and cultural vitality of ethnic groups on the other (ibid). However, others illustrate that the Royal Commission provided an opportunity for ethnic groups to "force their issues onto an agenda designed to redefine the country. They were fundamentally challenging the idea of the French/English construct as the main contradiction... and therefore the main plank on which the country should be redefined" (Joseph 1995:27).

extended to include the contributions made by the other ethnic groups. These concerns of the Commission were revealed in its report.

After tabulating its responses, The Committee recommended a major extension of bilingualism to help alleviate the disharmony in English/French relations (Bennett and Jaenen 1986) conceiving of a bilingual framework within which other ethnic groups could prosper. Although the Committee agreed to keep bilingualism as a national goal, it "modified its own terms of reference from biculturalism and argued for a *multicultural* policy" (my emphasis, Hudson 1987:63) within a bilingual framework. It attempted to establish an ongoing dialogue between the government and minority groups, launching the participation of those groups into the political agenda. A highly contentious policy emerged designed to fit minority cultural differences into a workable national framework.

1971 Policy Statement on Multiculturalism

In 1971, the Prime Minister, Pierre Elliott Trudeau,⁴ gave a speech to Parliament where he outlined the responses to the "B and B" report:

"It was the view of the Royal Commission, shared by the government and I am sure, by all Canadians, that there cannot be one cultural policy for Canadians of British and French origin, another for the original peoples and yet a third for all others. For although there are two official languages, there is no official culture, nor does any ethnic group take precedence over any other. No citizen or group of citizens is other than Canadian, and all should be treated fairly...adherence to one's ethnic group is influenced not so much by one's origin or mother tongue as by one's sense of belonging to the group...the

⁴It is worthwhile to discuss some of the controversy surrounding Trudeau and the development of multicultural policy. As Gwyn illustrates, "Today's Canada is Trudeau's Canada. Multiculturalism is his creation, reinjecting back into Canada the hyphens...Trudeau seduced us...[he] made his personal agenda the national agenda" (Gwyn 1996:118). Smith notes, "[multiculturalism] cannot be understood without some reference to the prime minister himself...Trudeau's move to embed the multicultural idea in federal policy thus reflected a strongly held conviction that the public power could not allow itself to become identified with promoting the interests of a particular segment of society" (Smith 1994:174). Ironically, any talk of multiculturalism is conspicuously absent from Trudeau's memoirs while he devotes lengthy discussion and debate towards questions of national unity. His imagining of multiculturalism insisted that the state indeed had a place in preserving the cultural heritage of its citizens. In fact, the development of official multiculturalism has been envisioned as a political ploy on the part of Trudeau to ensure another term in office by designing an attractive policy to lure in "the ethnic vote". In effect, the policy reflected his persona: charismatic, alluring and magnetic. "The programme only became real...when looking for votes after his near-defeat in the 1972 election, Trudeau abruptly tripled multiculturalism's budget to \$10 million. At the same time, his government started advertising heavily in ethnic newspapers" (Gwyn 1996:183).

individual's freedom would be hampered if he were locked for life within a particular cultural compartment by the accident of birth or language. It is vital, therefore, that every Canadian, whatever his ethnic origin, be given a chance to learn at least one of the two languages in which his country conducts its official business and its politics...a policy of multiculturalism within a bilingual framework commends itself...as the most suitable means of assuring the cultural freedom of Canadians. Such a policy should help to break down discriminatory attitudes and cultural jealousies, national unity, if it is to mean anything in the deeply personal sense, must be founded on confidence in one's own individual identity; out of this can grow respect for that of others and a willingness to share ideas, attitudes and assumptions. A vigorous policy of multiculturalism will help create this initial confidence. It can form the base of a society which is based on fair play for all" (Canada, House of Commons Debates, statement of Pierre Trudeau, 8 October, 1971).

The official promotion of multiculturalism in this "now famous speech" (Hudson 1987:63) has been heralded as a turning point in Canadian history (Fleras and Elliott 1992). Trudeau stated that:

"Canadian identity will not be undermined by multiculturalism. Indeed, we believe that cultural pluralism is the very essence of Canadian identity. Every ethnic group has the right to preserve and develop its own culture and values within the Canadian context" (Trudeau in McLeod 1981:13).

The policy "recogniz[ed] the political significance of the meteoric increase in the proportion of the multicultural community who were not of British or French heritage" (Passaris 1987:33). Multiculturalism, within the framework of official bilingualism, accentuated the need to maintain the cultural heritage of all groups within a multicultural population. It also established the right of members of "visible minority" groups to equality with members of the two charter groups of British and French ancestry. The dichotomy between language and cultural identity was emphasized. The cornerstone of the 1971 policy was, as Trudeau put it in his speech, "multiculturalism within a bilingual framework" - essentially what the Royal Commission had advised. The key tenets of multicultural policy were:

1. to assist all Canadian cultural groups that had demonstrated a desire and effort to continue to develop a capacity to grow and contribute to Canada, and a clear need for assistance
2. to assist members of all cultural groups to overcome cultural barriers to full participation in Canadian society

3. to promote creative encounters and interchange among all Canadian cultural groups in the interest of national unity

4. to continue assistance to immigrants to acquire at least one of Canada's official languages in order to become full participants in Canadian society (Canada, House of Commons Debates, statement of Pierre Trudeau, 8 October, 1971).

In an effort to put these principles into practice, the government established several programmes during the 1970s. There were courses to teach English and French to newly arrived immigrants, and programmes for Canadian ethnic studies in schools and universities. Multicultural grants were issued to support the development of various cultures and languages. Specific initiatives for language and culture maintenance received substantial government funding - reaching nearly two hundred million dollars between 1971-1990 (Elliott and Fleras 1992). A Multicultural Directorate was established within the Department for the Secretary of State in 1972 to promote social, cultural and racial harmony. The Ministry of Multiculturalism was set up to monitor government departments and the Canadian Consultative Council on Multiculturalism was devised in 1973. Five Canadian provinces eventually endorsed multiculturalism as official government policy with a variety of programmes geared towards cultural awareness. Provincial and federal efforts to improve the access to and responsiveness of services for ethnic minorities resulted in a restructuring of various social institutions within education.

To aid in the elimination of discrimination, the Directorate worked to enhance "intercultural and interracial understanding and the cultural integration of immigrants" (Peter 1981:59). In 1973, federal government expenditures amounted to ten million dollars distributed to nearly five hundred ethnic groups. Programmes were designed to fund the development of voluntary ethnocultural organizations where groups could "celebrate" their diversity through folk festivals and the like. A cultural enrichment programme was devised in which individuals were encouraged to learn and retain minority "non-official" languages through heritage language programmes. Financial aid was channeled through the Secretary of State to particular ethnocultural groups in order to further the aims of the multicultural policy.

In general, multicultural policy encouraged individuals to voluntarily affiliate with the culture and tradition of their choice supposedly without fear of discrimination or exclusion. Cultural differences were endorsed as imperative components of a national "mosaic" rather than being dismissed as incompatible with national goals. Ethnic differences were to be forged into a workable national framework (that of unity within diversity). This focus upon difference as unity was seen as a remarkable divergence from the conventional strategies of nation building, as Gwyn notes:

"For most Canadians throughout the 1970s and 1980s, multiculturalism became a synonym for tolerance. Since this by now had become central to their self-image, they supported the policy enthusiastically. Canadian nationalists often cited official multiculturalism as one of the characteristics, along with bilingualism, that made Canada distinct from the United States"⁵ (Gwyn 1996:187).

In 1972, the number of immigrants allowed into Canada was 122,006. By 1973, this figure had risen to 184,200 and in 1974, to the highest level ever, of 218,465 (Elliott and Fleras 1990). Various reasons have been proposed to explain the increased immigration flows to the country. It has been argued that Canada, with its increasing aging population and decline in birth rates (especially in Quebec) relies upon immigrants to ensure a steady population growth (Smith 1993). By 1981, the countries of origin of newly arriving immigrants had altered significantly. No longer predominantly European, 43% of immigrants entering Canada originated from Asia. The early 1980s witnessed further changes in immigration policies and restrictions. Due to the recession of the mid 1980s, the Canadian government decided to limit immigration levels, but wealthy immigrants were not refused entry if they were seen to be readily prepared to invest in the nation's future (ibid). However, by the mid 1980s, immigration levels were actively increased in light of the evidence that fertility levels were below replacement value. From a low point of 85,000 admissions in 1985, immigration levels were projected to rise to over 175,000

⁵Sealey insists that it is a "quintessentially Canadian" trait to compare Canadians with their southern neighbour. Thus, he reads multicultural policy as "[the Canadian government's] attempt to shift public focus from its weaknesses by flailing the Americans and exploiting latent anti-American feelings" (Sealey 1992:7). Thus, the United States' notion of the "melting pot" where "various immigrant groups blend together...to form a new and different culture...[with] each cultural group [having] an effect on the end product" (ibid:37) was juxtaposed against Canada's "mosaic" of multiculturalism, which encouraged partial assimilation along with the continued existence of a variety of cultures.

by 1990 (ibid). However, immigration figures have not yet reached the level they were for the first few years immediately after the multicultural policy was announced.

Between 1981-1988, multicultural developments assumed an even higher profile in redefining government-ethnic relations (Elliott and Fleras 1990). Since 1971, only a statutory framework for government policy had existed. By 1988, Canada provided a legislative base for multicultural initiatives by developing the Multicultural Act (1988) which sought to promote cultures, reduce discrimination, and accelerate institutional change to reflect Canada's multicultural character. The Multicultural Act of 1988 attempted to:

"recognize the diversity of Canadians as to race, national or ethnic origin...as fundamental characteristics of Canadian society and the policy is designed to preserve and enhance the multicultural heritage of Canadians while working to achieve the equality of all Canadians in the economic, social, cultural and political life of Canada" (Canada, House of Commons Debates 1988).

This policy reflected a more radical critique of power relations, and legislative reform was intended to provide the basis for social change. There was an expansion of government spending in support of ethnic activities where research and funding was also significantly increased: in 1983-1984, national grants amounted to \$2.6 million (Hudson 1987). The Canadian Ethnocultural Council (CEC), founded in 1980 as an umbrella organization representing the political interests of over thirty organizations, played a significant role in redrafting the multicultural policy. This led to the 1988 Multicultural Act, which encouraged a shift from heritage issues to equality rights issues (Kobayashi 1993). The Special Committee on Visible Minorities in Canada (SCVM) also made important recommendations, tabling its responses in the report *Equality Now!* (Canada 1984). Its eighty recommendations included a new framework for immigrant language training, increased funding for ethnic and racial group organizations, and continued government support of multicultural sharing events among other recommendations (Hudson 1987).

In 1984, the parliamentary Standing Committee on Multiculturalism was formed in order to establish the policy's past achievements and future needs. In 1987, this Committee made several

recommendations, documenting the need for a strengthened policy. In essence, the policy emphasized that:

“the [policy of 1971] is clearly insufficient and out of date...the cultural industries and government programmes are not doing enough to preserve and enhance our multicultural reality...multiculturalism can only be seen as something of a marginal policy...the mainstream of Canadian society and institutions have yet to be multiculturalized” (Canada, Standing Committee on Multiculturalism 1987).

The Committee also recommended the creation of a separate Department of Multiculturalism, and the division of the Canadian Race Relations Foundation. The Standing Committee on Multiculturalism identified racism as a serious problem in Canada (Henry and Tator 1985) and recommended numerous ways in which anti-racist policies might be adopted (Kobayashi 1993).

In 1988, the Race Relations Directorate was re-established, and given directives to fund programmes in the community, working with businesses, the police, and various forms of social services and government organizations.

To summarize, then, official multiculturalism has been promoted for a variety of social and political objectives, ranging from the elimination of discrimination to educating the public regarding the merits of cultural pluralism. Canada has transformed a descriptive fact and normative idea into an official ideology, as reflected in its government policies, programmes and practices. Having explored the policy dimensions of multiculturalism in Canada, I will briefly explore some critiques levelled at multicultural policy.

4.3 TAKING A CRITICAL LOOK AT MULTICULTURAL POLICY

Many insisted that multicultural policy was, and never will be, a substitute for anti-racist legislation, despite the fact that it has often been seen as such. In reality, issues of ethnic inequality and racial discrimination have significant political and economic roots gnarled in the history of social institutions in Canada, going far beyond what multicultural policies can address. As Henry and Tator (1985) argue: “cultural solutions cannot solve non-cultural problems” (Henry and Tator 1985:329). Programmes that support cultural retention will not successfully achieve racial harmony and equality. Despite the insistence that the present policy ought to go beyond the contradictions already institutionalized in the past, the Canadian

government has not successfully moved beyond recognizing Canada as constituted of a diverse ethnic population. There is no firm commitment to bring about anti-racist objectives. For an example, I turn briefly to a recent document issued by the Department of Canadian Heritage (1997). One of the key responsibilities of this department includes significant leafleting to commemorate "International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination" (March 21). Media packages and pamphlets are distributed across the country which state:

"Racial discrimination is a reality in Canada. It's not someone else's problem. It is ours. By working together, we can make a difference...it means reaching out and understanding one another. It means respecting our differences. We are a country of diverse people. That diversity has helped us build a great country...let's make a new beginning" (Department of Canadian Heritage 1997).

This particular document illustrates how the legacy of the 1971 policy continues to influence current policy development. It includes a quiz which asks, "[how many of your friends] are from other cultures?" and "[how often] if you see another person of another culture sitting alone in the cafeteria, do you make a point of talking to him/her?" (Department of Canadian Heritage 1997). These sorts of questions reflect a naive understanding of what it takes to achieve "racial harmony" as the policy calls it. The policy ignores the "more distressing image of racism occurring as a social relationship of dominance and subordination, created by and engendering structural inequality" (Kobayashi 1993:222). Most disturbingly, policy documents refuse to clearly define the term "race," which illustrates how much more needs to be done if the processes of racial discrimination are to be fully understood. As Kobayashi effectively argues:

"Nearly all [Canadian] government documents continue to treat "race" as an unproblematic category, naturally given rather than socially constructed. The objective, therefore, becomes that of overcoming discrimination, fostering equality *regardless* of "race". Such an objective only perpetuates the separation of human beings according to arbitrary phenotypical characteristics, instead of addressing the social processes by which races are created through an ideology of physical (or cultural) difference as the product not of nature, but of racism itself" (Kobayashi 1993:221)

Critics of multicultural policy insist that in order to address racial and ethnic justice, the policy must consider making some fundamental changes in the structures of society (see Henry and Tator 1985; Kobayashi 1993). As Kobayashi insists, the policy encourages a "symbolic" multiculturalism, where government programmes recognize and promote multiculturalism without a firm commitment to bring about its objectives (Kobayashi 1993:205). Racism cannot be eradicated through specific cultural retainment programmes. These sorts of projects which advocate an increased awareness and tolerance of racial diversity intonate that racism is simply a matter of attitudes, rather than unveiling the systematic nature of discrimination. As a result, it is taken for granted outside of the country that because of such a strongly funded multicultural policy, racism should be on the decline in such a "racially diverse" nation. However, as Barrett states:

"Racism in Canada has been institutionalized...racism in this country is as deeply rooted as that in the United States..it remains puzzling how Canadians have been able to maintain a reputation for tolerance and harmony. What has characterized Canada has been an ostrich-like denial that a significant problem of racial hostility exists at all" (Barrett 1992:199).

As a policy, multiculturalism expresses the ideology of the nation as a unity of human difference, without unravelling how tensions arising from those differences can be managed. In other words, there is a strong contradiction between multicultural policy's desire to celebrate difference, representing an ideological commitment to equality, and the persistence of structural racism as a practical reality among Canadians. As a result, the perception of racial differences continues to arise out of the persistence of social inequality (Malik 1996:7). If power is discussed, it is in relation to the notion of "visible minorities", which is, in itself, a profoundly problematic concept (Synnott and Howes 1996:141). It ignores the fact that not all ethnic minorities are visible, encouraging the separation of some minority groups from others. Equally, one might be defined as a "visible minority" in some spaces and not in others. Notably, many other minorities not included in the concept are also visible: namely, chronological minorities (the young and the old for example) and those who are clearly impoverished, not to mention gender differences. It is assumed that all members of a "visible minority" face the same experiences of racism, where differences are homogenized under the banner of "visible

minority". The term defines "visibility" in terms of its relation to the "invisible" majority. However, ethnic identity is not limited to visibility, as it is also a matter of divisive politics.

I have attempted to address the widespread criticism levelled at multicultural policy development over the years. Some have called for the abolition of multiculturalism as official government policy, reasoning that it only encourages the ghettoization of "ethnics" whereby immigrants can "indulge their nostalgic love for their mother countries...far too fancy a piece of window-dressing for a government to get rid of" (Philip 1992:186). Others have insisted that it designates "official, largely cosmetic government programmes designed to placate the Quebecois, native Canadians, blacks, and Asians" (Stam 1997:190). These sorts of critiques reflect public sentiment about the policy (Bissoondath 1994) and by 1998, the Department of Multiculturalism had merged with the Department of Canadian Heritage, the budget of official multiculturalism having been cut back significantly.

This section has attempted to clarify the ways in which the Canadian government has processed multicultural ideals through a state-operated apparatus. The next section will situate readings of the policy within the context of the lives of informants, towards a recognition of multiculturalism as "a web of complex social relationships, a multiplicity of powers and constraints, [and] a shifting composition of cultural representation" (Kobayashi 1993:223-224).

4.4 CANADIAN MULTIETHNIC WOMENS' READINGS OF MULTICULTURAL POLICY

"In societies where multiculturalism is encouraged, racism is still rampant in various forms. This is because [multiculturalism] paradoxically permits diversity [while] masking ethnocentric norms, values and interests" (Bhabha 1990:208)

Despite the proliferation of research on particular ethnic groups in Canada, comparatively little research has been conducted on the Canadian public's perception of the multicultural policy.

This is a serious deficiency because multiculturalism forms the backdrop against which much of the current research in ethnic studies becomes meaningful. Although several studies have explored the multiple meanings of multicultural policy among particular ethnic groups (Bienvenue and Goldstein 1985; Cryderman *et al.* 1985) I choose to examine the meanings of

multiculturalism for participants in this study. Given that these women are both positioned as “ethnic” by the rules of the multicultural policy, and at the same time, often considered to be of European or French origin by virtue of their own multiethnic backgrounds (many of the women were partly European and partly Asian, for example) I was curious to unpack their readings of the policy to explore how it has provided a particular social framework within which individuals contemplate their own ethnic and national allegiances.

I will argue that the policy produces particular discursive and material social spaces through which informants negotiate both their ethnic and national alliances in innovative ways. Informants provide a re-reading of the social cornerstone of multiculturalism through a creative critique, insisting that the policy compartmentalizes fluid and flexible senses of place and identity. I want to foreground the more “opaque instances of exclusion” (Sibley 1995:1) subtly encouraged by the policy. I will address how women in this study defined the Canadian multicultural project in very specific ways, demonstrating that while the term connotes nuances of diversity and equality, as a cultural representation, it carries a series of contradictions inherent in institutional processes in general.

Although I did ask questions about multicultural policy, I soon discovered that multiculturalism was discussed only infrequently in the interviews. Conspicuously absent from their discussions were explorations of multicultural policy, especially as an anti-racist tool. Instead, if the policy was discussed at all, it was described as an institutional project which funds and promotes staged ethnic representations, supporting the expression and deliberation of private forms of difference, through food, family and religious conventions. Many informants indicated that these events did not communicate any sense of the daily realities of their lives. Naela, for example, makes the distinction between the multicultural composition of Canada and the multicultural project through her clear distaste for the term:

Naela: I hate the word multiculturalism.

Minelle: OK. Tell me why.

Naela: Well to me, it's sort of like this government created term to like make Canada into some pathetic attempt at patriotism, a way for people of colour to be able to look at

Canada in patriotic ways? All I can see is this cheesy commercial with kids of different colours, holding hands? It just brings up this really kinda fake, superficial, "let's dance for each other, and make each other spring rolls to show how much we love each other!" sort of idea?! So, I think that, but I don't feel that, I think that I really enjoy watching dance performances, and eating food from different cultures, I mean I love it as much as anyone else does, and it's interesting. But that doesn't, that doesn't do anything in terms of racial biases or prejudices. It doesn't break any stereotypes or barriers. Like if anything it just perpetuates them because it sort of minimalizes entire cultures! Into the dance, and the food. So in that sense I hate it. But I do think multiculturalism, in terms of getting people in communities to live separately but as part of a larger society, I mean I agree, I can't imagine how else people would be able to do it. To be able to live?

Naela emphasizes that multicultural policy, driven by an inauthentic celebration of heritage and tradition, is not successful in eradicating racism in Canada. Inequality of opportunities and stratification continue to be tolerated, endorsed and promoted on the basis of racial and ethnic origins, through government funded celebrations of cultural traditions. Policies which aim to offer equality "regardless of race" often actively perpetuate the notion of natural "racial" difference from which racism and discrimination take their moral and intellectual force (Kobayashi 1993). As Naela suggests, the celebration of particular stereotypical snapshots of ethnic cultures sanitizes cultural differences. By preserving these differences in the form of segregated ethnicities, the Canadian cultural "mosaic" of multiculturalism preserves biases by assuming each and every ethnic group is a monolith of particular views and interests. In other words, some participants found themselves essentialized in racial and national terms.

Chantal too contends that we are a far cry from witnessing the prospects for a true multicultural society. She insists we are seeing just the opposite: a disturbing trend towards ethnic and regional fragmentation which again points out the contradictions of multiculturalism as a project versus an adjective:

I don't see a lot of multiculturalism here. I see a lot of different people here. But people ultimately gravitate and keep to themselves. So it's kinda fraudulent. I think it's a nice idea, I think it's a theory, I think it's something that is often attached to Canada, but we're not living it. Because I don't socialize with Chinese people, I don't socialize with a lot of different people, even though they're outside my door. Right? It's a misconception that that is a fact that we have here. Because the term implies people living amongst each other, co-existing, it implies an integrated society. And we do not live, and that's why you have Chinatown, Little Italy. And you have. You know, that's not multiculturalism.

That's segregation. They're different things. And I don't think we're learning from living among each other. Because we're not. So in other words, Chinatown can be down the street, and I also go to Chinatown because I can go in, quite freely, and I go to Kensington Market, and go to the fish market, or whatever, I'm not learning. My mind isn't being opened. I'm not learning about Chinese culture [just] because Chinese families live there. And to me, multiculturalism implies that it's the sharing of information, and that we're all made more aware? Because we live amongst each other? But that presumes that we do in fact live amongst each other. And we don't. We don't socialize that way, we don't...it's a lie, basically (laughter)

Chantal sees through the superficialities of celebrating cultural diversity, and went on to argue that multicultural policy can serve to camouflage underlying racial animosities. Both Chantal and Naela revealed that their perception of the government policy of multiculturalism was one which reinforced crude cultural stereotypes. They doubt that the policy has had an impact upon decreasing racism in Canada. Apart from these two women, very few participants specifically addressed the policy of multiculturalism. Instead, any question that I posed about multiculturalism invariably led to extended debate around how participants continually find themselves positioned outside of national discourse, despite the project of multiculturalism which insists, "Together, we're better!" (Department of Canadian Heritage 1997). National and racial discourses were inextricably intertwined in interview transcripts. Women in this study voiced exasperation around the difficulty in identifying as Canadian and I argue that this is partly due to the emphasis placed upon their ethnic allegiances inherent to multicultural policy.

Firstly, I argue that multicultural policy focuses upon ethnicity as a primary aspect of identification. While this may have been the case for those who immigrated to Canada decades ago, the majority of participants in this study grew up alongside the emergence of this policy and only see ethnicity as one of the many defining aspects which frame their sense of self. Ethnic identity, especially among multiethnic women, is complex and incorporates many components such as parental heritage, racial and cultural affiliations and religion, among other factors (Root 1996). Their situationality and locality becomes one of the key sociopolitical signifiers regarding their "ethnic place" in the Canadian landscape as Zenia suggests:

I was born in Montreal; therefore, I'm a Montrealer. That's how I look at it. You know, my parents, my mom's from Norway and my dad's from Sri Lanka, and they're 20th

generations of Norwegian and Sri Lankan respectively, you know. But that doesn't make a difference because that doesn't... that's not who I am.

Zenia reads her identity as more than the sum of her ethnic parts. The specifics of her identity do not mold neatly into a form suitable for multicultural display. As Bissoondath argues, "multiculturalism effectively stultifies the personality, creating stereotype, stripping the individual of uniqueness" (Bissoondath 1994:211). With its emphasis upon ethnicity, multiculturalism effectively reduces Zenia's identity to her ethnic constituency. The experience of occupying a doubled space in two ethnic cultures complicates any simplistic reading of ethnicity within multicultural policy, as multiethnic women have a vast array of ethnic allegiances. I will suggest that multiethnic women in this study often shrug off the chain-like restraints of ethnicity as defined by the multicultural policy. Their experiences of ethnicity tell a far more complex story.

Marical, for example, suggests that multicultural policy confuses questions about her many ethnic allegiances, and as such does not allow her the opportunity to display all of her "gorgeous incongruities" (Domosh 1998:209):

You know, is your history your family? Or is it, you know, are you a product of your family history or are you just your geography or how you were educated or what your immediate values are? Like how much of your past is part of you? I guess that's the question.

Multicultural policy's focus on an individual's ethnicity places emphasis upon the importance of the past, where Marical's identity is defined by her parents' origins, rather than her own current set of ethnic allegiances. There are a myriad of factors which contribute to an individual's sense of ethnic identity, which changes over the course of a lifetime and through various geographical spaces (Root 1996). These identifications are rarely static - but multicultural policy would have us believe that they are. Secondly, I suggest that the policy constructs specific socio-spatial boundaries between the identifications of "Canadian" and "not-Canadian". I wish to remind the reader of Trudeau's initial statement, where every ethnic group has the right to preserve and develop its own culture and values within the Canadian context. The phrase "within the Canadian context" is cause for some concern. Multicultural policy

advocates a strangely paradoxical position. On one hand, it insists that all Canadians deservedly have the right to preserve their ethnic heritage. However, at the same time, this liberal notion tends to veil the assumption among citizens that there is such a thing as a discrete and separate "capital-C Canadian" society which exists more or less independently of ethnic groups, and towards whose development ethnic groups are encouraged to make their various contributions. This concept was illuminated through many narratives around the theme of who is considered a "real" Canadian. If I did ask a question about multiculturalism, it would inevitably lead to discussions around the difficulties in identifying as Canadian in what participants read as their own country. According to the women interviewed, an "authentic" Canadian is still based on the centrality of British and French stock - those "real" Canadians who are part of a "capital-C Canadian" society. Both these identities are read as white, or European. Subsequently, multiethnic women continue to be positioned as outsiders, excluded from the national discourse, despite the goals of the multicultural project. The process of control in the form of multicultural policy is manifested in the exclusion of individuals who are deemed marginal (Sibley 1995:xv). Racism subtly penetrates the national discourse, where those who are positioned as "ethnic" as designated by the policy are thus recognized as "outside" of Canadianness. Julia summarizes the issue as follows:

I mean Canadian is very much a white definition. I mean that's why people question me when I say I'm Canadian and they don't see me as being white. If they don't accept that as an answer then they're not seeing me as white and I guess the Canadian definition is very much a white one. Look at who's in power, look at who's running Bay Street.⁶ It's all white guys. How many people of colour are there in the House of Commons. How many women are there in the House of Commons?

Julia's narrative reveals the ubiquitous nature of racism (not to mention sexism) and how it bleeds into dominant readings of the national rhetoric. I am reminded here of the work of Eisenstein, who insists that "no nationalism can fully include a multiracial/woman-specified democracy" (Eisenstein 1996:15)⁷. Those with particular phenotypes - or those categorized

⁶ Bay Street is the financial district of Toronto.

⁷ The inextricability of gender and nation does not elude me and I acknowledge that it has elicited commentary from a variety of sources, although I do not discuss it here in great detail. I refer the reader to Radcliffe (1998 and 1996) and Yuval-Davis and Anthias (1989).

under the rubric of "visible minority status" - are excluded from the dominant discourse of Canadianness. In other words, you're "not quite if you're not white" (Kondo 1997:93). Below, Julia further explains how the particular underpinnings of the question "Where are you from?" assume her foreignness. In a country where ethnic differences between citizens are racialized, it becomes increasingly complicated to identify as Canadian:

I've gone to the point where I feel like when people ask me if I'm mixed and they're not happy with the response or they ask me where I'm from and they're not happy with the response, "I'm Canadian," I feel like turning around and asking them, "well, what the hell are you? Are you Canadian? What makes you more Canadian than me that you would question the fact that I'm Canadian?" Because that's obviously not the response they were wanting. But you know it's like, well, you asked me a stupid question, I'll give you a stupid answer.

Julia is understandably resentful because she is excluded from the discourse of the State where forms of national identity are exclusionary, homogeneous and unitary. When Julia tells others, "I'm Canadian", she discovers that her response is interrogated, her identity distanced, and her phenotype exoticized as different. To identify as Canadian seems insufficient and almost unacceptable because "at some point, buried in the idea of nation is the idea that there is only one identity that has the legitimate claim" (Appadurai 1997). In the process of deliberately identifying herself as Canadian to deflect the question, "Where are you from?" Julia refuses to conform to prescriptive racial categories, creating new meanings of nation during social interactions. However, this still reflects a struggle on Julia's behalf, where her desire to identify as Canadian is vigorously interrogated, frequently challenged and often rejected.

Thirdly, I wish to further problematize how ethnic and national positionings in Canada are entangled by looking at how the multicultural policy produces spaces of distance through the "hyphen". As I have mentioned earlier, multicultural policy advocates that immigrants in Canada should position their ethnic identity first and foremost, making their individual contribution to the Canadian "mosaic" as Gwyn asserts:

"The absurdity here is that no one from Italy, say, or Somalia, comes to Canada to be an Italian or Somali. They come here to be Canadian. As soon as they landed, though, their new state in effect tells them that rather than becoming Canadians they must remain Italian-Canadians, Somali-Canadians, and so on" (Gwyn 1996:234).

These hyphens⁸ of multiculturalism in effect operate to produce spaces of distance, in which ethnicity is positioned outside Canadianness - as an addition to it, but also as an exclusion from it. Zhaleh suggests it becomes impossible to position oneself as solely Canadian without announcing one's exoticized ethnic identity:

I wouldn't just say I'm Canadian and that's it. Because I mean just the fact for me to even say when someone's asked me, what are you, the fact that if I say Canadian, that doesn't satisfy them. That just tells you right there like you know what I mean? It's not possible to be just Canadian and no race. Like I couldn't realistically live in Canada and think that way.

Zhaleh finds it difficult to claim a national identity without declaring her ethnic allegiances. The policy of multiculturalism is reassuring to those who vigilantly patrol the borders between ethnic and national belonging. In effect, the state encourages the maintenance of an apartheid form of differentiated citizenship. The burden of hyphenation, where one is seen as not solely "Canadian" but "Canadian and fill-in-your-ethnic-background-" is especially heavy for women of multiethnicity, who further trouble the hyphen by employing and intermingling two or more ethnicities in their own definitions of their identities, through the coining of labels like "African-Persian-Cherokee-European-Canadian". The multiethnic person resists the occupation of a single ethnic space. These "hyphenated circumlocutions" (Hanchard 1990) also make the process of self-definition lengthy and exhausting, requiring a whole geography and history of explanation. Faith commented:

I think that's why sometimes I hate discussing it when people ask [where are you from] Because I can't just say one thing. Like you can't just say you're Canadian and have people understand oh you're Canadian, or whatever. I always have to go into this lengthy explanation about Chinese, Polynesian, and then British. Then there's the whole thing about oh well where were your parents born? And it's like Fiji, and then that goes into that whole Fiji thing. And no, I'm not Fijian. But you're from there. No, my mother was born there physically, but it's like. Which brings me, if I think about it, full space to here.

⁸ In contrast, the United States' "melting pot" ideology discourages hyphenation. The metaphor of the "melting pot" suggests various immigration groups blending together with the existing culture to form a new and different culture. The idea that each cultural group has an effect on the end product encourages the adoption of an "all-American" national identity. This is not to assume, of course, that racism is successfully eradicated as a result.

Well, I was born in Canada, so I am Canadian, but what is Canadian? AAARGH! It drives me crazy! And it's just like this whole, long—I'm not just one simple thing.

The hyphen effectively marks a distance from potential claims to nation, a troubling symbol which refuses to admit the possibility of the commingling of ethnicities and national citizenship, compounding difference as a "property marker, a boundary post, a knot, a chain, a bridge, a foreign word, a nomadic, floating magic carpet" (Wah 1996:60). Participants inhabit that space of the hyphen, where difference is continually expropriated. The hyphen holds a particular tension, articulating a union of contradictions, each word symbolizing the inverted contradiction of the other (Hanchard 1990). Consequently, the hyphen marks places of ambiguity and multiplicity. More attention needs to be paid to the hyphen itself, rather than the words - and subsequent places - on either side of it.

Kiirti further demonstrates the frustrations and paradoxes inherent in her desire to identify as Canadian, pointing out the problematic nature of attempts to do so:

I mean I hate the fact that people ask me where I'm from. And I'll say I'm Canadian. And they say, "No no no no no, but where are you FROM?" "I'm from HERE." "No no no, but where are you FROM?" And I'll say, "Fine, you want to know? I'll tell you." And I'll tell them ALL the different places my parents are from, And then they'll say, "Oh, so you're Canadian." They DO! And it's like, "GO AWAY!"

Kiirti's comment neatly encapsulates the messy contradictions of assuming a Canadian identity. The very constituency of the social fabric of Canada is a reflection of its diverse ethnic population, which has been read as intrinsically "Canadian" outside the country (see Elliott and Fleras 1992). However, it becomes impossible to identify as Canadian within the country, in spite of the country's diversity, given that when one questions national borders, one also questions the boundary markers of race (Eisenstein 1996). As such, it is repeatedly revealed that hegemonic national discourses do not take kindly to those who inhabit marginal spaces - especially multiethnic women, who might be seen as "the double foreigner, the double stranger...held up to the phantasmic and found doubly wanting" (Eisenstein 1996:41).

Participants explored how the widely disparate circumstances of ethnic allegiances are formed and transformed over time, where dominant discourses of racial and national meanings do not reflect these women's interpretations of ethnicity. I believe racist ideologies underlying dominant discourses about the nation further confuse ideas around the nebulous nature of Canadian identity. Indeed, reverberating through many of my transcripts are inquiries into who Canadians "really" are, and what binds us together. This question is one that visits and revisits, reflecting the ebb and flow of Canadian national being in the shadow of the Americans, who seem absolutely certain of who they are. As Bissoondath notes, "Canadians continue to struggle with self-definition, as if they keenly felt the lack of a national image" (Bissoondath 1994:34).

The conception of citizenship suggested by multicultural policy demands a model of homogeneous people which is not representative of the complex and diverse ethnic composition of the country. In the next section, I will show how informants challenge and contest socially constructed categories of Canadian identity outside of "the two solitudes" (Taylor 1993:1) by developing new reconstitutions of cultural citizenship.

4.5 DEVELOPING NEW RECONSTITUTIONS OF CULTURAL CITIZENSHIP

"The scraps, patches and rags of daily life must be repeatedly turned into the signs of a national culture, while the very act of the narrative performance interpellates a growing circle of national subjects" (Bhabha 1994:297)

The concluding section of this chapter will attempt to address how multiethnic women in this study imagine themselves as part of the nation. I will propose that women of multiethnicity are transforming traditional definitions of what it means to be Canadian. I will contemplate new kinds of citizenship imaginable outside of the "two solitudes" model - kinds of citizenship which both take into consideration and transcend racialized elements, the deliberation of, as Kaplan puts it, "a space in the imagination which allows for the inside, the outside, and the liminal elements in between...[not] a romanticized pastoral nor a modernist urban utopia" (Kaplan 1987:187).

Many cultural theorists have insisted that the nation is an invention (Eisenstein 1996:43). However, while Hall insists that the relationship between a national-cultural identity and a

nation-state is now beginning to disappear (Hall 1991) and Mohanty declares, "the nation-state is no longer an appropriate socioeconomic unit for analysis" (Mohanty 1991a:2). I would argue that questions of national belonging still figure predominantly in the minds of informants, re-asserting its place on the agenda for future exploration. I am reminded here of Philip's powerful words:

"I carry a Canadian passport, I therefore, am Canadian. How am I Canadian, though, above and beyond the narrow legalistic definition of being the bearer of a Canadian passport, and does the racism of Canadian society present an absolute barrier to those of us who are differently coloured ever belonging? Because that is, in fact, what we are speaking about - how to belong - not only the legal and civic sense of carrying a Canadian passport, but also in another sense of feeling at "home" and at ease. It is only in belonging that we will eventually become Canadian" (my emphasis, Philip 1992:16)

It is important, as George reminds us, to acknowledge "the seductive pleasure of belonging...in nations...while working toward changing the governing principles of exclusions and inclusions" (George 1996:200). I wish to unravel how informants "think affectionately" (Said 1991:116) about the politics of national allegiances by trying to capture some of the everyday experiences of the nation.

There are moments when the everyday experience of the nation confounds the dominant definition of the national narrative. Informants offered flexible alternatives to the dominant national constructions. I want to examine how different subject-positions are being transformed or produced by different conceptions of nationalism. They present their personal temporalities of struggle which disrupt the traditional hallmarks of Canadian identity. They reveal "not what they [they] are, but rather what [they] are becoming" (Deleuze in Probyn 1996:190-91). The very experience of, as Philip puts it, "bearing a passport", and growing up in Canada gives rise to other modes of belonging and alternative national manners. I would categorize many of the following "scattered belongings" (a phrase coined by Ifekwunigwe: forthcoming) as spaces which create "not so much a space of resistance as an entirely different geometry through which we can think power, knowledge, space and identity in critical, and hopefully, liberatory ways" (Rose 1993a:159). I will explore these new formulations where ethnic and national allegiances intermingle in particular ways, reflecting re-imaginings and reframings away from definitions

of national identity dictated solely by ethnicity, towards self-definitions based upon a series of multiple (but not limited to ethnic) identifications. Finally, I will show how women of multiethnicity read their own multiethnic status as compatible with contemplations of national identity.

The relationship between multiethnicity and Canadian identity

"Is there a love of the nation which is emancipatory?" (Appadurai 1997)

For some multiethnic women, a futuristic reading of Canadian identity would move beyond definitions of European or French descent. They challenge their otherization by the unitary notions of national identity and assert that being different by no means equates with being un-Canadian. This new version of national identity displaces and shifts the terms of a European/French linked nationalism. By opening up the term "Canadian" to scrutiny, participants reformulate the conventional meanings associated with the phrase as Makeda suggests wistfully:

I think that Canadian, as a term, has a certain reference to a certain kinda person. And I'd LOVE to have that category opened up. So that people can say, Canadian, and imagine all sorts of different people. Right? I'm not making a bid for an amnesiac Canada that can suddenly embrace its own diversity and forget its past transgressions. I think they both have to occur. Canada has to come to terms with, and it doesn't have agency, but all those things that comprise Canada, the stories have to be able to address all those people, and those histories. And I think that I want to be part of that project. Because it seems to me to feel very exciting? It feels very exciting when someone like Shyman Shulvydera who wrote "Funny Boy" wins a prize, not because he's winning the prize, but because he can stand up and say, "I want to say something about refugee policy because now I wouldn't even be able to come into this country", right? So as you're lauding this cultural contribution, think of all the other cultural contributions they're disallowing, by setting up these prohibitive reform policies. Right? So I think that in that way, I would like to be part of redefining Canada. I think Canada is a country that can continually open itself up to new people.

As Makeda explains, the act of claiming a Canadian identity would mean the occupation of a distinctly contradictory space, where one can both embrace a sense of country while at the same time unveil the exclusion of specific histories of oppression and resistance. This transformation of the term "Canadian" would include an unpacking of the embedded racist history of the country. This might include contemplating uncomfortable questions regarding the First Nations

peoples' broken treaties and rightful place in the Canadian polity, acknowledging the many Italians who gave their lives in the building of Toronto's subway system, and the work army of Chinese immigrants who painstakingly built up the Canadian railroad. Makeda suggests that appropriating the term would include unmasking the hidden histories of the majority, and "histories without the majority" in an attempt to "snatch from the hidden histories another place to stand in, another place to speak from" (Hall 1991:123). Thus, this tortured past would become part of the present, informing and playing a part in the creation of Makeda's sense of national identity.

In reading the present in terms of the past, because the past has never been fully transcended, Makeda proposes the occupation of a space where she can finally be proud to belong. The representations of both the tales among oppressors and the stories of those who have been continually placed on the outside would become an integral part of this portrait. In doing so, the voices of the marginalized are actively centered as part of a re-imagined citizenship.

Informants read their own multiethnic identity as a model for an optimistic Canadian citizenship where their ethnicities are not necessarily compartmentalized, and belonging is forged through difference - but not only through the lip service that multicultural policy offers. As I have previously mentioned, multiculturalism in Canada confuses issues of ethnicity and nationalism by treating ethnicity as clearly divisible, dichotomous and nonoverlapping categories outside of Canadianness. However, multiethnic women continually experience ethnicity as overlapping layers. They are in an excellent position to empathize with additional challenges of developing a real "multicultural" identity compatible with Canadianness by challenging assumptions about racial and ethnic purity. For Darius, questions about her multiethnicity were influenced largely by her own sense of nationalism and vice-versa, where her own multiethnicity is read as a positive stance to experience the nation:

I think being Canadian, Canada is really on this frontier of racial miscegenation, so I don't really separate [my ethnic and national identity]. I see myself as being Canadian and being mixed race. A lot more, than someone perhaps that see themselves as monoracial, someone who was full blooded Korean, and their parents were from Korea, and they lived in Canada, but they grew up speaking English all the time, I think it's probably even more of a challenge for them. To me, for me, being Canadian and being

mixed race and the issues around identity there, are not at odds with each other. They are related in a way. If I had more stronger cultural experiences, it might be more difficult.

Clearly, for some multiethnic women, being multiethnic is not necessarily incompatible with Canadian identity. In the narrative below, Darius explains how she feels more "Canadian" than any of her multiple ethnic parts. The term can be used to evoke the imagery of home: community ties, warmth, familiarity and belonging and she asserts herself as part of the dominant national discourse:

See I know I'm Canadian, there's no question about it. Whereas my Mom, who is Japanese, full blooded Japanese but third generation Canadian, comes from a group of people that were interned in the war because they weren't Canadian, but had never necessarily been to Japan, you know? So maybe it was more of a difficulty and challenge for them to ask the question, "Am I Canadian? What is Canadian?" For me, it's never really been an issue because I was born here, I have always lived here. I don't feel Japanese, and like I say I don't feel Japanese, or Native, or white. Really. Canadian to me is like a nationality. It's like where you were born. And that's really clear to me. It doesn't have anything to do with my racial identity...race isn't just blood quantum or skin colour. Or nationality. Or parentage, or experience. It's like something else, it's something more than all these other things! And who knows where it comes from!

Multiethnic women do not allow themselves to be divided along the lines of ethnic origins, given the impossibility of that task. Maribel reads her multiethnic identity as harmonious with her national ties and insists on calling herself mixed which encapsulates not only her ethnic identity, but also her sense of citizenship as well:

I think mixed is a flexible enough word. That it can catch a lot of people in its net. Mixed background, mixed heritage. I find most useful. I don't know why. But it is my heritage. And it's more than just ethnicity. It's the fact that I'm Canadian too. Kinda thing. It's all mixed up. Together.

Women of multiethnicity are used to names, labels and categories imposed upon them by others. However, as Trinh reminds us, "despite our desperate attempts to mend and maintain, categories always leak" (Trinh 1989:141). To counteract this compulsion of classification, many multiethnic women decide to identify as Canadian. However, it does not necessarily follow that in choosing this identification, they blindly follow the rules as advocated by the policy. Instead, it reflects their very real experience of growing up in Canada. Some multiethnic women I talked to did not feel any particular kinship with either of their ethnicities, and many of their parents

were second or third generation Canadian, so their parents were born in Canada as well. Participants exercise their right to choose their own ethnic allegiances. Identifying as Canadian reflects particular social decisions on their part through a clear re-defining of their own allegiances to nationhood. For Emma, this would mean delineating her own definition of Canadian identity. This sense of national allegiance is rife with paradox. Emma reveals the constant ephemeral and shifting senses of both national and various ethnic selves she experiences on a day-to-day basis, depending upon her location:

I was born in England and then we moved to Canada, which added a whole new layer of mixed race on it. So I always sort of like to quote a friend, who described herself as a salad of racial genes you know because she's just a little bit of everything. And in a way, that's maybe uniquely Canadian. There are so many people here that come from so many different cultures and especially in Toronto, which is where I grew up, that it's just it's kind of typical of who we are. We're an immigrant country with an immigrant culture. [In Canada] you can define yourself however you want in a way that isn't necessarily associated with a certain set of cultural values. So my [national] identity has been just a mixture of all those factors.

Emma compounds questions of race and nation by insisting that moving from England as a multiethnic immigrant imposed another layer of "mixed race" upon her identity. Women of multiethnicity are active participants in shaping their own identities by altering others' perception of their place in Canada. Emma writes herself into the national discourse in particular ways, recalling a story where she deliberately chose to identify herself as Canadian in order to defy existing stereotypes related to her phenotype, reflecting a defiant re-appropriation of national identity:

I remember in Washington a cab driver saying: "So where are you from?" "Oh I'm Canadian" I said, and then it went, "where are you really from?" "Well I was born in England" I said, just to stymie him further because what he wanted to hear me say was: "Yeah my father's half Chinese." He wanted to be able to identify me with a racial group. Which I just refuse to be identified with- like either-or, you know. The closest I want to be identified to these kinds of cultural stereotypes is to say I'm Canadian, which defies pretty much all stereotypes because there's nothing really identifiable about it.

Emma employs the term "Canadian" to describe herself in this situation as a foil, forcing another to think about his racist assumptions about what is a real Canadian. By refusing to be identified with a racial group, Emma resists definitions of ethnic identity which reinscribe conventional notions of traditional culture. Her version of national allegiance refigures Canada as a more

useful "catch-all" phrase because it is nebulous, recognizing that one need not be European to be Canadian.

Shima also re-appropriates the term "Canadian" reading it as a label which reflects multiple identifications:

I feel Canadian. I think that I'm certainly more Canadian than - I don't feel Scottish. I feel like I have some connections there. I did live there. I also feel like I have connections with India. It's not romanticized in a way that I think I'm going to go there and find acceptance. I think when I was younger I might have thought that. But I do feel Canadian. I think Canadian is about struggling with these questions.

For Shima, being Canadian means to constantly struggle to negotiate your various identities, reflecting Trudeau's comment that "national unity, if it is to mean anything in the deeply personal sense, must be founded on confidence in one's own individual identity" (Trudeau in Peter 1981:60). To be Canadian, for many multiethnic women in Canada, means to question any notion of a coherent, stable and autonomous identity - either national or ethnic, as Sara suggests:

I think [being mixed race] is very typically Canadian. I mean, all I've seen of Canadians are different racial groups. So I think that it's only natural that there would be a very big mixed population. So I think it typifies being Canadian. That's perfectly in tune with that.

The social and ethnic constituency of Canada parallels Sara's own multiethnic identity. Identifying with nationalism does not necessarily mean the subsequent adherence to ethnic stereotypes as dictated by the policy of multiculturalism. These women's interpretations of what constitutes difference are constantly shifting, socially constructed and geographically diverse. They point out the popular misconception that to be Canadian means to be solely of either European or French descent by designating it a site for the recognition of complex national and ethnic allegiances, acknowledging the wide variance within ethnic groups. To claim Canadian status for Faith means to go beyond the legalistic definition of possessing a Canadian passport. It is to experience a sense of home:

I have a very weird hang-up about [being asked, "Where are you from?"] When they ask, it's like, I'm from Canada. Like, where was I born, where do I fit, what is my country of affiliation. It's Canada. Absolutely. And that's another thing that really irritates me about

the whole thing about Canada, when people say where we're from, people respond, "I'm from Czechoslovakia." Wellll, no you're not! You have a Canadian passport, you're Canadian, with Czechoslovakian heritage. Like I HATE that. Like I'M Canadian. Yes, I have, a variety of roots! But like my, experience is Canada. Like I HATE this whole thing, all these people who think they're other things. Especially if you're born here. I'm sorry, but you're Canadian.

Faith has a clear sense of home and belonging in Canada and her identity is closely linked to questions of national identity, marking the connection between geography and culture. This connection between home and identity is not just an attachment to the abstract concept of nation. Choosing to identify as Canadian reflects these womens' desires to develop a new vision of Canadian identity, where they continually renegotiate the tropes that assert nationhood as a timeless essence.

In the narrative below, Kiirti, who is adopted, reveals how she felt when she discovered her parents' individual ethnic identities, and expresses how that had an impact upon her own sense of country:

I mean once I knew, once I knew where everybody was from, whatever, and there was massive mix, not only that mix, how could I then deny the people that I had grown up with? And all of the experiences that I had had, and I was such a mixture that truly WHO WAS I? I am Canadian, this is where I am born, this is the culture that I know, and my mother forever and my father forever telling me how CANADIAN I am, and my accent, and, my Canadian-isms, and God forbid, I say eh?! I mean, they're ON me! (chuckle) I am... It's like that commercial!⁹ I-AM-A-CANADIAN. That's what I am. And how could I possibly be anything else? I couldn't. Too many things to choose from. And this sounds so patriotic, but that is what makes Canadians. And, and. Sort of my God! Alright! Well, now I'm decided! I should be, the new symbol for Canada! I am one big melting pot of stuff! (laughter) I'm a stew! (laughter) A big Canadian stew! (laughter)

Kiirti reads her multiethnic identity as a model for Canadian citizenship. She explains how her body is marked by her own sense of Canadianness, reflected in her accent and her "Canadian-isms". She refuses to renounce her Canadian identity in the name of a compartmentalized ethnic identity, given the variety of her ethnic mixes, and emphasizes the salience of her own experiences growing up in Canada. Women of multiethnicity

⁹ Kiirti is referring to a series of Canadian beer commercials, where the viewer is bombarded with numerous Canadian icons, including the maple leaf and prominent Canadian road signs, over a soundtrack of Canadian rock music. At the time of the interview, these commercials were inundating the airwaves continually. I draw the reader's attention to the words of Mukherjee who insists that "when we non-white Canadians watch beer commercials, we never fail to notice our absence there" (Mukherjee 1994:72). However, Kiirti draws a comparison between her own sense of nationalism and these commercials, despite the non-white presence in the advertisements.

challenge not only the social construction of race, but also the social construction of Canadian citizenship, by proposing a connection between their own multiethnic status and their sense of nationalism. They are articulating for themselves something that exceeds previous categories of race and nation, writing themselves into existence.

4.6 CONCLUSION

"[Multicultural policy] entertain[s] and encourage[s]...cultural diversity, [while correspondingly] containing it. A transparent norm is constituted, a norm given by the host society or dominant culture, which says that "these other cultures are fine, but we must be able to locate them within our own grid" (Bhabha 1990:208)

In this chapter, I have attempted to show how the policy of multiculturalism has both impeded and facilitated senses of belonging for multiethnic women in this study. I have endeavoured to illustrate how the imaginations of identity inherent in discourses of Canadian multicultural policy offer overly static representations of ethnic representations and nationalism. While many still read multicultural policy as an inclusive vision of humanity, the narratives of Canadian multiethnic women suggest a more critical reading of the policy's goals and aspirations. Their stories offer new framings of national identity in response to complex processes of social interaction, where they are constantly defining, redefining, playing and merging with ethnic and national identities.

Multicultural policy frames identity through a formalized temporality, placing emphasis upon roots and origins rather than the complicated identity routes of the individual (Gilroy 1993). I have suggested that multiethnic women offer new models of citizenship, working out from the individually identified body to the national body politic. I hope that this chapter offers simply one step in that awkward dance of reluctant partners known as Canadian race relations, a complicated entanglement of racial representations (paraphrased from Hanchard 1990). The present debate over multicultural policy should be extended to encompass the vernacular understandings of these women's discursive and material practices with the engagement of national and ethnic alliances. The next chapter will further interrogate notions of the two solitudes, but this time, I will explore the solitudes of blackness and whiteness. I critique discussions of whiteness as defined by academic readings by drawing upon more stories from women of multiethnicity.

CHAPTER FIVE

Complexion: Racing Through Whiteness

5.1 INTRODUCTION

"If you want to talk about what it means to be white, you've got a paragraph. If you want to talk about what it means to black, you've got a library" (interview with Katya)

In this chapter, I will review the emerging literature on whiteness as discussed by contemporary race theorists (Delgado and Stefancic 1997; Dyer 1997; Fine *et al.* 1997; Frankenberg 1997; Frankenberg 1993; Roediger 1991) and depart from these works by exploring the myriad ways multiethnic women in this study reconceptualize whiteness. Rather than taking whiteness as a self-evident category for analysis, I map out the varied processes of racialization more fully by showing how attributes generally associated with whiteness, namely, skin colour and privilege, are constructed in various ways and contexts.

Firstly, I will interrogate the historiography of white studies, recently deemed "the whiteness industry" by some scholars due to the proliferation of cultural works exploring issues of whiteness (Ifekwunigwe 1998a). I will point out that the general scholarship on whiteness has assumed that a white identity is only available to individuals of exclusive European ancestry (but see Twine 1996). Missing in the literature is adequate data on multiethnic women and their subsequent negotiation through racialized spaces. I will argue that discourses on race rely upon "oppositional aesthetics" (Mukherjee 1994), where whiteness is pitted against blackness.

Secondly, I will demonstrate how meanings of whiteness shift in particular contexts by unveiling narratives where whiteness is viewed as a fluctuating political category rather than skin colour, illustrating a complex racialization process. In chapter two, I allude towards developing a feminist geography which would allow us to think in terms of pluralities and diversities rather than unities and universals (McDowell 1993b). In order to approach this task, I begin by asking how racial attributes are constructed in various ways and in particular contexts. These questions help avoid potential essentialism by examining how processes of racialization are place-specific.

Thirdly, I address a particular aspect of the missing discourse of whiteness by considering the unproblematic constitution of whiteness as a site of privilege and power. By focusing on the slippery nature of racial categories as experienced by my informants, I will illustrate how women of multiethnicity resist dominant representations of whiteness (such as privilege) by marking and identifying themselves in particular ways, embracing various positions outside of whiteness.

5.2 REVISITING "WHITE STUDIES"

"How can it be that so many well-meaning white people have never thought about race when so few blacks pass a single day without being reminded of it?...White people just didn't know, had just never thought about it" (Williams 1997:24)

This section provides an assessment of literature available on whiteness. I will explore the ways in which contemporary theorists working in critical race theory have examined the social construction of whiteness by uncovering its particular invisibility as a site of privilege and power.

The scholarship on whiteness emerged in the academic sphere in the late 1980s as part of a critical race theory ((Frankenberg 1997; Fine *et al.* 1997; Delgado and Stefancic 1997; Bonnett 1997; Frankenberg 1993) where whiteness "was dragged out into the foreground after the [silhouettes] of "blackness" [were sketched]" (Wong 1994:136). Whiteness is something which is difficult to describe but almost impossible not to recognize. It is a topic which does not seem to exist but one whose power and presence is continually felt. It has the curious ability to remain shrouded within a veil of invisibility - ensuring its transparency - while at the same time asserting its centrality and dominance in multiple ways (ibid). Mirza defines whiteness as follows:

"[an] unchallenged hegemonic patriarchal discourse...which quietly embraces our common-sense and academic ways of thinking...a powerful place that makes invisible, or re-appropriates things, people and places it does not want to see or hear, and then through misnaming, renaming or not naming at all, invents the truth -what we are told is "normal", neutral, universal, simply becomes the way it is" (Mirza 1997:3).

In order to address this troubling tendency towards one-sided discourse, feminist theorists

addressed their own problematic stance to whiteness as a site of privilege and power, often in conjunction with their own contemplations of male privilege and largely influenced by the women of colour critique. Some of the early dialogues about whiteness and privilege were conducted by white lesbians (Bulkin *et al.* 1984) who offered analyses of how race had largely influenced their lives, and suggestions for a potential movement which would create spaces where differences within and between women were negotiated and discussed (Wong 1994:135). Feminist writers like Peggy McIntosh (1989), Maureen Reddy (1994) and Jane Lazarre (1996) have illustrated through autobiographical work how whiteness confers membership within a social group and the importance of contemplating those social positionalities as a way of being in the world. Peggy McIntosh was one of the first feminists to begin to critique the notion of whiteness by unpacking the term, writing about the “backpack of privilege” that accompanies white skin. It is worthwhile to quote a lengthy passage from her groundbreaking essay, “White Privilege and Male Privilege: A Personal Account of Coming to See Correspondences through Work in Women’s Studies”:

“As a white person, I realized I had been taught about racism as something which puts others at a disadvantage, but had been taught not to see one of its corollary aspects, white privilege, which puts me at an advantage...I have come to see white privilege as an invisible package of unearned assets which I can count on cashing in each day...like an invisible weightless knapsack of special provisions, assurances, tools, maps, guides, codebooks, passports...some of the daily effects of white privilege in my life: if I should need to move, I can be pretty sure of renting or purchasing housing in an area which I can afford, I can turn on the television and see people of my race widely represented, I can talk with my mouth full and not have people put this down to my colour, I can do well in a challenging situation without being called a credit to my race...[i]n unpacking this invisible knapsack of white privilege, I have listed conditions of daily experience which I once took for granted, as neutral, normal, and universally accessible to everybody...it is an open question whether we will choose to use unearned advantage to weaken hidden systems of advantage, and whether we will use any of our...power to try and reconstruct power systems on a broader base” (McIntosh 1989:10-12)

McIntosh’s knapsack includes both “unearned assets”, things that should be entitled to everyone but which are in fact are awarded to particular racialized groups. White privilege requires social reinforcement and maintenance, and an important component of maintaining this privilege is not to see the mechanisms which reinforce it. Many writers have further developed McIntosh’s ideas. Flagg (1997:629), for example, talks about the transparency phenomenon - the tendency

of whites not to think about whiteness or about norms, behaviours, experiences or perspectives that are white-specific and afford substantive advantages to whites. Ware (1992) has recounted the ways in which the collusion of the first wave of white feminism and the white working class with the dominant white, bourgeois male society expedited white womens' privilege and power. She examines racist practices which are implicated in feminism, explaining how white femininity is historically constructed in ways which are irrevocably linked to race and class. Ware argues that in the context of British imperialism, white women were represented by empire-builders as frail victims to be protected from lustful others, revealing the conceptual tendency to prioritize one system of dominance over another and to oversimplify the relations between the two. Fine (1993) called for a more critical interrogation of the processes of racialization, urging feminists to "undo" their own race towards recognizing how racialization and gendering are mutually constituted.

Drawing from McIntosh (1989), Ruth Frankenberg (1993) in White Women: Race Matters offered one of the first empirical analyses of how white women think about race. In her analysis of forty interviews, Frankenberg illustrates how race shapes white women's lives. Most white feminists cited personal reasons for exploring whiteness in relation to their own relationships to status. Frankenberg's desire to explore whiteness grew from her dissatisfaction with the limited repertoires of responses available to white feminists when charged with racism. According to her, sites of multiracial feminist dialogue "deteriorated into [places] where racial tension and conflict seemed to [fester]" (Frankenberg 1993:3) and she "found herself straddling two sides of a 'race line'" (ibid). Frankenberg explores how the women she interviewed read their whiteness as something they chose not to think about, as a naturalized state of being, as normal, with anything else being positioned as "other". She repositions the voices of these women to assert her claim that the world is constituted out of relations of power and privilege, and in the social landscape, whiteness as privilege plays a major role (Frankenberg 1993). Frankenberg sees whiteness as a position of structural advantage, associated with privileges of the most basic kind. Secondly, she claims it carries with it a set of ways of being in the world, often not named as white but looked upon as either normal or invisible. Through her empirical analysis, Frankenberg illustrates how racial denial tends to engender a disingenuous innocence, reflecting a refusal to acknowledge the oppressive constraints of whiteness.

Since Frankenberg's path-breaking book has been published, there have been many more texts in feminist and cultural theory critiquing the notion of whiteness, providing a route for those who did experience white privilege to talk about issues of race and identity without fear of offending those who had originally critiqued their passive position. Theorists have argued that the challenge for contemporary cultural analysis is to make whiteness viable as culturally constructed, ethnic identity contingent upon the violent denial of difference. Several new edited works have gained popularity, including Fine *et al.*'s Off White which hopes to "pry whiteness...in all its glistening privilege... open... and wedge it off of its unexamined centre" (Fine *et al.* 1997:viii), insisting it is necessary to study whiteness as a system of power and privilege because it wages symbolic violence through its refusal to name its defining mechanisms. These writers began to displace the "unmarked marker" status of whiteness (Frankenberg 1997:1) and colour the apparent transparency of white positionings by pointing out the accompanying privilege and power that often attend white skin.

While Frankenberg's exploration of the multiple intersecting experiences of race and place (1997) has made one of the most explicit references to the spatial diversity of white identities (Bonnett 1997), these works have been weakened by the absence of any historical detail, not taking into consideration how white identities are reworked and refashioned through various eras in particular hegemonic ways. Current ideas about race and racialization do not spring up out of a vacuum - rather they have particular cultural precursors, and several historians (Ignatiev 1995; Roediger 1991) have revealed how contemporary definitions of whiteness have originated. They point out the excesses of white consciousness and glorification, showing how white supremacy was strengthened during periods of turmoil and economic competition, construing whiteness as a product of American capitalism and labour organizations (Bonnett 1997). In particular, Roediger has made a significant contribution in this arena by analysing the experiences of white, working class immigrants in the US. His research shows how societies constructed whiteness in relation to ethnic and class origins:

"Immigrants could be Irish, Italian, Hungarian and Jewish, for example, without being white. Many groups now commonly termed part of the "white" or "white ethnic"

population were in fact historically regarded as nonwhite, or debatable racial heritage, by the host American citizenry" (Roediger 1994:112).

White identity was seen as a means to control definitions of the working class. Roediger demonstrates the extent to which the "simian" and "savage" Catholic Irish newcomers in the 1850s to the US gradually fought and worked their way into whiteness, after being largely excluded by other European groups. Roediger effectively delineates the particular sociohistorical conditions under which diverse groups are integrated into whiteness. Noel Ignatiev's How the Irish Became White explores the spaces between Irishness and whiteness. Through a detailed citation of labour history and the personal and political consequences of assuming or shrugging off a white identity, Ignatiev insists that by identifying with whiteness, the Irish ceased to be Green (Ignatiev 1995).

Geographers have remained curiously quiet about whiteness, even while other cultural theorists discuss its inherently spatial dimensions (Frankenberg 1993). There is a tendency to disregard and ignore whiteness as a racial category in most geographical texts, just as there is a tendency to ignore whiteness's inherent spatiality in most critical race texts. The most striking exceptions are the works of Alastair Bonnett (Bonnett 1997; Bonnett 1996b). Bonnett has made the most significant contribution to geographical works in whiteness, charting the erasure of whiteness within geography and racial inquiry (Bonnett 1996b). He calls for a more reflexive "geographical race scholarship" (Bonnett 1997:199) which would include an exploration of the inherent spatialities of whiteness.

To conclude this section, critical white studies has been considered the next step in critical race theory (Delgado and Stefancic 1997) for many contemporary theorists, inviting whites to examine themselves "more searchingly and...behind the mirror" (ibid:4) at their own complicit role in contributing to oppressive systems of privilege and power. Studies have recognized how whiteness has constituted not only systems of government, law and economy, but also a whole discursive terrain through which ideas, institutions, forms of representation and knowledge production is created. I applaud these writers' desires to explore the "extent to which the stakes in whiteness impasse so many of our race rituals" (Williams 1997:27). However, there are gaps

in these approaches which are worth considering in greater detail. I hope to explore these limitations through the narratives of the multiethnic women in this study. In particular, these largely theoretical explorations of whiteness encourage a hierarchical and oppositional approach to race, effectively obscuring the diverse range of experiences of whiteness.

5.3 RELATIONAL APPROACHES TO RACE

Although we have witnessed a flurry of scholarship on whiteness, there is a consistent refusal to trouble the seemingly sound relationship between whiteness and blackness. This is the task I set myself in this section - my attempt to "remove the white glaucoma that has ruined scholarly vision" (Fine 1997a:58). Current discussions about whiteness encourage thinking about race as an either/or proposition, perpetuating a kind of crude asymmetry that has tainted many critical analyses of race theory:

"The binary logic of race, like all binary thinking, in which the world is perceived in terms of oppositions (white/black, male/female, reason/emotion) encodes a hierarchy, with the first term of these oppositions superior to the second" (Reddy 1994:75).

Hill Collins discusses how difference is defined in oppositional terms, where one part is not simply different from its counterpart; it is inherently opposed to its other (Hill Collins 1990, see Bondi 1992). The "race relations" paradigm which is drawn upon in these works refers exclusively to the relationship between "people of colour" and "white people", with the result that there is a focus upon the racism of whites who experience power and privilege over those "people of colour" (Miles and Torres 1996:33).

This emphasis upon a dialectic discourse disturbs me. I have previously (Mahtani 1994) expressed my discomfort with the category of "woman of colour", where its very polarity seems to encourage an identity which is immediately visible. The category of "women of colour" acknowledges that women labelled as such are definitively "coloured". Whiteness is defined not as a process, but in opposition to "non-white". This implies that white culture is the hidden norm against which all other racially subordinate groups' so-called differences are measured. Whiteness is positioned as the standard by which the rest are marginalized as "different".

In the majority of works on whiteness (but see hooks 1991; Scales-Trent 1995) “whites define whiteness...the official rules that define race...have been the white rules, even though the meaning of race has been contested in many ways” (Mahoney 1997:305). I applaud the way that critical “white studies” has explored the complicit privilege associated with white skin, where race has been anchored to an obsession with skin colour. In the process, however, it is subtly communicated that if whiteness is envisioned as a position of privilege, invisible, non-raced, non-ethnic and colourless, then it may be assumed that non-white is disadvantaged, oppressed, coloured, ethnic and visible.

Although critical race theorists exploring whiteness have emphasized its unique invisibility, few have analysed the particular and diverse situations under which white people are raced. This is ironic, given the critical attention that has been paid to the processes of racialization for those deemed “non-white”. Many contemporary writers working in race theory (Gilroy 1993, hooks 1990) have demonstrated how people have come to be thought of as black or Asian. hooks (1990) helps to reformulate outdated models of identity. Lamenting that the African-American community has been framed through a narrow construction of “blackness”, she calls for a critical examination of essentialist categories to understand how multiple differences among African-Americans, including class mobility, gender differences and sexual orientation have dramatically altered what is known as the “Black Experience”. This call has been taken up by several writers, including the wide array of voices in Mirza's edited volume Black British Feminism (1997) who reveal “other ways of knowing” that challenge the normative discourse by bringing new critical insights to bear upon gendered and racialized exclusion.

Such critiques have opened up the possibilities of affirming varied black experiences through a radical deconstruction of the unidimensional representation of blackness. However, it still proves difficult to unveil the invisibility of whiteness or show the diverse range of “white experiences” which is also dependent upon multiple conditions (such as class and gender) that Europeans have managed to impart to whiteness (Bonnett 1997). To begin to do so, I would argue that we need to find ways of making whiteness visible in order to illustrate the realization that there are many ways of being white in the world, and that there is no homogeneous white community as Ignatiev points out:

“There is an Italian culture, and Polish...there is youth culture and drug culture and queer culture, but there is no white culture...whiteness is nothing but an expression of race privilege”(Ignatiev 1997:608)

Whiteness is not normative in any absolute sense. Relational approaches to race tend to homogenize both “white” and “non-white” experiences by setting up rigid polarities between the two, effectively obscuring the diversity of experiences among those who inhabit the spaces of whiteness and blackness. In fact, I would go so far as to argue that these works hint at a patriarchal approach in their insistence on hammering home the particular privilege that attends white skin, refusing to disrupt modernist notions of attributes associated with racial categories.

The rest of this chapter will devote itself towards destabilizing the polarities by interrogating these relationships in greater depth. The failure to unpack the complexities of whiteness risks the potential of further essentializing categories. Fine *et al.* worry that in their desire to create spaces to speak about whiteness, they may have reified the concept, and despair that a “terrifying academic flight towards something called white studies could eclipse the important work being done across the range of race” (ibid:xii). I am concerned that these fears could be realized shortly. Discussions of race have become locked in an oppositional model, where blackness is pitted against whiteness and both categories are effectively essentialised, erasing the possibility for those who are raced as both white and black to position themselves on the racialized terrain. I hope to develop a renewed exploration of varied experiences of whiteness, drawing from Mahoney (1997) who hopes to hear of new experiences of racialization among women who are racialized in various ways:

“[women] need to reckon with the ways in which some of our practice will not be addressed in our theory because it is not visible to us. This problem cannot be answered by arguing that women really are oppressed as women. Rather, if we want liberation as women, we need to explore the experiences and needs of *all* women. We will need to hear accounts of women's experience in which whiteness itself may become visible in ways we find uncomfortable”(Mahoney 1997:642)

Whiteness, both as a powerful symbol and as a set of social relations, is defined and experienced through the particular mediation of time, place, sexual preference, and class, among other dynamics. This recognition ought to enable critical theoretical development in white studies

which specify the complex interweaving of relationships among class, gender, and racial attributes, accepting that each form of difference is structurally simultaneous. It will also aid in unsettling the keen separation implicit in so much race research. In order to demonstrate ways in which we can make whiteness visible, I turn next to the voices of my informants, who explored their own complex processes of racialization with me.

5.4 THE MULTIETHNIC EXPERIENCE OF WHITENESS

“I am beyond your peripheral vision, so you might want to turn your head” (from the song by Ani DeFranco, “32 Flavours”)

In this section, I will address the ambiguous and contradictory spaces of whiteness through the narratives of multiethnic women, who negotiate impressions of themselves as both white and non-white inbetween spaces of racialization. Subjectivity becomes a function of one’s location in the social structure. I insist upon the necessity of disengaging the couplings of whiteness and blackness because determining these identities as stable entities denies the possibility of other modes of being and belonging which are demonstrated by multiethnic women in this study. In particular, the womens’ very real presence in places where they persist in occupying *both* white and black spaces of identity are denied. The multiethnic women in this study effectively refute the idea that a white identity is only available to those of exclusive European descent. Instead, commingling in both spaces, they refuse the discourse of identity as constructed through a particular dualistic articulation of difference.

My participants were raced¹ in multiple ways dependent upon context, ways which spill over the categories of white and non-white. A fluctuating categorization is at play in determining who is permitted to be white, and who is marked as black, which asserts both the temporality and the spatiality of whiteness. Since the narratives of informants are not necessarily congruent with the current literature available on whiteness, I want to pose some new questions in order to disrupt whiteness as a self-evident category for analysis.

* How is white identity constructed, enacted and challenged by women who are multiethnic?

¹I use the phrases “raced” and “racialized” interchangeably throughout the thesis.

*** How are multiethnic women raced as white and as non-white?**

*** How do racialized dualisms play themselves out in the day-to-day realities of multiethnic women?**

I will attempt to answer these questions by demonstrating how attributes generally associated with whiteness - in particular, skin colour and privilege - are created and invested with meaning in various ways much dependent upon time and space. I will address the shifting nature of whiteness for participants, where identities are both constructed within the spaces of "difference" and at the same time a matter of rich and complex negotiation. In this section, I explore narratives among participants who insisted that while they were half white, they were not white; and explore the spatialities of whiteness, where participants acknowledged how processes of racialization take place within particular physical contexts rife with complex social relations.

"I'm half white, but not white"

"Looking like and identifying as a white person did not mean that one was a white person. Several interesting consequences flow from this conception of racial identity: if a person could look white, but not be white, then what does it mean to be white? Could one be white but not look white? Perhaps looking white is a necessary yet not sufficient condition of being white. What does a white woman look like anyway? If phenotype is not what racial identity means, then is how you look a representation of racial identity?" (Franke 1997:467)

"Of course, no-one is all white. I am submitting here to the cultural fantasy of white racial purity not because it is real or possible, but because it is widely accepted. Most seem to believe that a child could be all white, and that he or she should be raised as such if physical characteristics permit" (Morales 1996:49)

In this section, I hope to unravel the complexities of whiteness among participants through a discussion of the phrase, "I'm half white, but I'm not white" which emerged several times in the transcripts. Several women made the distinction between the two categories. Although the phrase at first sounds paradoxical, I will argue that to be "half-white" and "not white" at the same time represents two separate entities of existence which requires a further disentangling. Makeda explored the ways whiteness has been reified by explaining how she voices her own racial identity in a particular strategic manner by telling people she is half white:

When I get asked, "Where are you from?" I'm always tempted to say, "Well, I'm half white" and just leave it at that, because it's impossible to be half white, right? Like racism and white supremacy disallows that. So, to say you're half white is meaningless, within the you know, racialized context. So, you can say "I'm half Japanese" and somehow that is intelligible? As a statement of identity?

By calling herself "half-white", Makeda tries to short-circuit the (ill)logic of racial categorization. Appiah (1997) explains how being racialized within a particular group is, for many people, centrally implicated in the construction of their life worlds. Makeda takes up that challenge by insisting that it does not mean anything to be half white, because whiteness is equated with invisibility and cultural neutrality. Makeda also recognizes that racialized identities are asymmetrically based on descent: "whites" are not supposed to have any "non-white" ancestry (as Makeda says, it's disallowed) whereas blacks and Asians are allowed to have some "non-black" or "non-Asian" blood but will still be classified as black or Asian.

The production of whiteness is read as both an embodied experience and a social construct, shaping desires and the possibilities for belonging and acceptance as Zhaleh explains:

There was this Korean girl and I remember it got me really mad when she said to me, "I just thought you were totally white." I hated hearing that, I remember, and it made me even more mad, the fact that she was Oriental and saying that. How could she not see that I'm half Oriental, I remember thinking in my mind. I don't know, I really didn't like that, like, even though yes I'm half white, it's like, but I'm not a white person, living in this world you know. I just have the general feeling that it's easiest to be a white person living in our society. I mean, in terms of like race, you know. That's what I mean by all this majority/minority. But I know I'm definitely not a white person. I am part of like half of that, but if you categorize me now I get really upset because I'm not fully white and therefore I'll never be white. But at the same time, like white people don't look at me. I'm sure they don't look at me and think oh I'm not one, you know when they're talking to me. I'm sure that's not their perception, they think I look exotic.

The legacy of the one-drop rule² is echoed through Zhaleh's narrative which indicates society's desire to maintain white racial purity and privilege. She makes a distinction between being of

²The "one-drop rule" emerged in the late 17th and early 18th centuries as a means of increasing the number of slaves in the United States (Root 1996; Davis 1991). It incorporated a legal standard which designated individuals with any black ancestry as black, thus effectively blocking access to claims to whiteness (King and DaCosta 1996).

half European ancestry, which she deems white, and whiteness as a place of structural advantage, privilege and power. Zhaleh is marking a difference between being “full white” and “half white”, which constructs whiteness as a biologically pure category (Frankenberg 1993). The word “white” takes on multiple meanings. Zhaleh explains how she was affronted when someone assumed she was white. Even though she acknowledges that she is the recipient of white privilege at times, and she has been welcomed “into the club” (Morales 1996:44), she does not identify as white herself because of its connotations with class and privilege.

Chantal made it clear during her interview that she did not see her experiences in life as the same as those as someone who identified as white:

Minelle: How do you feel about the term biracial?

Chantal: It doesn't imply a full identity, it means you're half of something and half of something else? Which even though that is what you are to me it has some sort of implication that doesn't imply fullness, or wholeness. A whole identity. And that's what I don't like about it.

Minelle: How do you feel about people saying "You're half-white half-black"?

Chantal: Hate it! (laughter) Hate it! Hate it because it doesn't define or describe my experience. HERE. Doesn't mean anything. And that would be, like what do you mean? You want to talk about my genetic makeup, I can talk about that no problem. That is my genetic makeup. But that is very different though, than my life experience. And in terms of validating my life experience.

Chantal rejects the label of “half-white half-black” because it is not a racial “reality” for her. Chantal's phenotype is troubling to the enforcement of strict racial boundaries because she generates social uncertainty about what those categories mean. A “distance-difference” (Rose 1997b) is articulated. Chantal problematises the whole notion of being “half and half”, a theme which emerged prominently, and was discussed with much disdain by the majority of women in this study. There is a tension here between the value placed on having a “whole” or “unitary” self where it assumed that someone who is multiethnic could not possibly have a whole sense of identity. Chantal sees herself as a whole person, not simply the sum of her parts. Chantal further makes a distinction between her phenotype (her physical makeup) and genotype (her genetic makeup). She feels quite comfortable with discussing her genotype as that of European

and black heritage. But although that represents, in her words, her “genetic makeup”, it does not socially or personally explain her own life experiences as a multiethnic woman who is classified by others into awkward racial slots. Chantal explains that she is not racialized in the same way as those who identify as white even though she does share European descent.

The spatiality of whiteness Recent work on whiteness has made little effort to specify the various ways whiteness is experienced. Nor does it attempt to unravel the multiple, spatial forms of whiteness (Bonnett 1997) and the diverse ways white identities are transformed in different places. Bonnett insists that geographers are ideally suited to challenge the transparent, ahistorical, aspatial nature of whiteness (Bonnett 1997). Apple also echoes these sentiments: “there is a social geography of whiteness...whiteness is a spatial concept in many ways” (Apple 1997:125). As mentioned above, Frankenberg (1997; 1993) and Twine (1996) are among the few theorists to interrogate the spatiality of whiteness. Frankenberg (1993) has envisioned whiteness as a set of locations which are historically, socially, politically and culturally produced (Frankenberg 1993:6). Twine (1996) has explored the fluidity of identity position in her study of “mixed race” college students raised in wealthy American suburbs, finding that “mixed race” girls thought of themselves as white and then “became black” by joining various social networks at the multiracial university of Berkeley. However, while Frankenberg’s and in particular, Twine’s work pays close attention to the process of racialization within specific places, I still feel that whiteness is reified as a self-evident category for analysis. As Bondi and Domosh (1992) insist, we need to expose the inadequacies of the central, hierarchical and oppositional categories that form the core of intellectual scholarship by moving towards a theory grounded in individual agency. To do so, I insist on a renewed emphasis upon the importance of place and locality in the creation of local consciousness and various sets of social relationships in order to understand how racial attributes work in tandem with social conditions. I feel such nuanced dynamics can be unveiled through a specification of the ways in which whiteness is engaged, appropriated, and theorized in a range of geographic locations and historical moments.

The narratives of my informants challenge the notion that racial identities are fixed, natural and unmalleable. Whiteness is not a stable and clearly defined space, and is constantly changing in different times and places. The women spent a great deal of time talking about their ability to

move in and out of whiteness. There are different degrees of whiteness at play here where you can be white in some arenas, half white in others, and not white in other places at all. For example, Marical demonstrates that the category of whiteness is rarely concrete and is constantly shifting and changing:

Being mixed just recognizes a multiplicity of identities. It recognizes that fluidity. It recognizes the fact that somebody might think I'm white, somebody might think I'm black, but you know that, that there is like a sort of, there's nothing definite about things. I get that all the time, "Are you white or are you black?" you know, and it took me a while to get there but I always [say now], 'I'm not, I'm both, I'm not either. I'm mixed race.'

Marical recognizes that racialized categories are socially created and transformed through particular spaces. To assume that the multiethnic person will identify with how they look is "presumptive, but pervasive" (Root 1990:197). Just as Marical is perceived differently by different people, Marical refuses to locate herself as either white or black. Although others locate her as either white or black in particular spaces, she defines herself as "mixed race" as a way of positioning herself outside the oppositional discourse of race. This is one way to make clear how whiteness is a socially constructed ideology which can be emptied of biological meaning. Marical's positionality becomes one of the most important socio-political signifiers of racial production and contestation.

Williams claims that "by the time one has become an adult, one's racial membership within a hierarchically structured, racialized society has been concretized" (Williams 1996:199). This notion is problematic for multiethnic women in this study. For them, racial categories are rarely stable, and are instead fluid and flexible, continually shifting and changing. Much closer to their experiences are the observations of Miles and Torres (1996) who recognize that racialized categories are socially created, transformed, and destroyed through historical time. I would argue that they are also altered through geographic spaces as well. There is a particular evolution of the meanings attached to whiteness. Those who are deemed white in some respects may not be seen as white in others. This notion becomes even more complex for multiethnic women because their phenotype is not neatly placed by the race border guards. Makeda explains how others rely on particular physical markers in order to classify her racially:

It really depends on everything. It's funny because I think that race is very obvious, sometimes. And yet, there's so much, it's so slippery? Right? For me, it depends on the time of year, where I am, how long my hair is whether I'm wearing makeup, whether I'm not, what kind of clothes I'm wearing, like I run the gamut, of kinda...people identify me as all sorts of different things.

It is a constellation of circumstances, among which skin tone is only one, which creates the potential for racial identity. Within the potential range of identities, a multiethnic person can experience and adopt various racialized identities in plural formations. Makeda explains how the intricacies of cosmetics, hair, clothes, time and space play a role in the ways in which she is raced, problematizing the polarities normally associated with racialized identities by accentuating the multiplicity and mobility of social positioning.

Racial classifications are not only slapped upon multiethnic women like a “peel-on, peel-off label” (Jones 1994:14) but also something that they can sometimes choose at various times in their lives, and in particular places.³ There are crucial relationships between the categories of whiteness and blackness, and individual agency enacted by my informants. Although cultural representations of race are indeed powerful, these women are not simply passive recipients of “social inscriptions” (Streeter 1996:308) of these categories. They experience a wide array of racialization processes. Naela, for instance, pointed out how whiteness is dependent upon place, people and context:

There are moments I feel dark, and I like it. There are moments that I like it. And then there are moments that I feel really really like, WHITE. And it really depends on my mood. The way I look at the colour of my skin. Depends on who I'm with. When I'm around white people, I feel distinctly darker than them, and different, even though some of them might have skin the same colour, I just feel darker? But then, when I'm around other people, I feel very white.

Naela makes the important distinction between “feeling white” versus “being white” which

³ It is naive to presume, however, that the multiethnic woman always experiences an unopposed freedom to choose how she wishes to be perceived racially. There is a very real fluctuation in the ways in which women in this study are racialized, as I will explore in greater depth in my final empirical chapter, “Tricking the border guards: performing race”.

highlights that racial identity is about more than skin colour. It also represents a separate component of associated feelings and thoughts. Being white is shifted from an external definition to that of an internal feeling. Naela is choreographing a very complex dance of tensions through her discussion of multiple racialized selves. Her own sense of her racial identity changes within the context of particular situations, indicating the perpetual relational aspects of a white identity. Whiteness is neither constructed, nor exists within, a cultural vacuum. As Fine (1997a:58) remarks,

“whiteness and colour are therefore not merely created in parallel, but are fundamentally relational and need to be studied as a system; they might...be considered “nested” rather than coherent or independent variables”.

Clearly this is the case for Naela, where how strongly her colour “appears” depends upon the place and company she is in at the time. Racial identity is geographically and temporally specific and perhaps we need to ask new questions. Instead of continually asking “Who am I?” perhaps we ought to contemplate, “Where am I”, effectively shifting the focus from a politics of identity towards a politics of location (Bondi 1993; Probyn 1990) making context a key step towards racial identity shaping. The narratives demonstrate how participants acknowledge that processes of racialization occur in sites of competing and complex social relations.

I have demonstrated how racial identities are capable of shifting, which shows how race is a social construction and not necessarily associated with skin colour. In the next section, I will illustrate that meanings associated with whiteness - and in particular, privilege and power - shift as well. Although the category of whiteness and blackness are weighed down with particular sociohistorical meanings (to explain and justify social inequality and injustice) I will argue that there are other ways of envisioning these categories outside these seemingly inevitable affiliations. I will counter claims that whiteness is normal, invisible, or a secure site of privilege by citing excerpts from my informants.

I have illustrated the various degrees of whiteness, and how whiteness can shift in different arenas. Whiteness can mark you, and being read as white in some contexts can appear as difficult, different and dangerous. These markings are not natural, nor neutral and I will show

how these women take up these markings and how they play with their whiteness. In the next section, I address a particular aspect of the missing discourse in works on whiteness: namely, the unproblematic constitution of whiteness as site of privilege and power.

5.5 WHITENESS AND PRIVILEGE

“...Charis is stuck with being white. A white rabbit. Being white is getting more and more exhausting. There are so many bad waves attached to it, left over from the past...like the killing rays from atomic waste dumps. There’s so much to expiate! It gives her anaemia just to think about it. In her next life she’s going to be a mixture, a blend, a vigorous hybrid, like Shanita. Then no one will have anything on her.” (from Margaret Atwood’s novel The Robber Bride)

Most of the literature on whiteness has focused on the advantage of white skin (Scales-Trent 1995; Reddy 1994) and we should expect many more studies exploring this connection, as Reddy stresses, “much work needs to be done in order to make visible and undermine white culture and its ties to domination” (Reddy 1994:141). In the most recent volume on whiteness, the writers focus squarely upon whiteness as “[the] prismic site of constructed dominance” (Fine *et al.* 1997:viii). Feminists have charted arguments insisting that whiteness is produced as an advantage both through pedagogy and the economy (Fine *et al.* 1997; Frankenberg 1993).

While not dismissing the very real reality of these associations and the powerful ways they shape social relations, I propose that these characterizations encourage the myth of racial superiority by ignoring the complex interweave between culture, class and individual experience in different contexts, and the structure of privilege within and outside of racial categories. They often obscure the multiple subjectivities of identities, assuming that racial classifications remain undifferentiated by the dimensions of class and gender, among other dynamics. The links between whiteness and privilege are often unattended in these readings, supporting the ideology of white supremacy by not dismantling the hierarchical relationship between whiteness and non-whiteness that upholds white privilege.

I also want to flag that the privilege of whiteness has never insulated white women from the brutality and misogyny of men. The “white women in these theories miss a lot of the reality of white women in the practice of male supremacy, revealing a trivialization of the white woman’s

subordination implicit in the discussion on white women and privilege" (MacKinnon 1997:301). By asserting the particular privileged status of whiteness time and time again, we are emphasizing a clean, coherent cut between privilege and underprivileged, making it difficult to contemplate potential zones of alliances across charged political lines of difference. Issues of power, privilege and prestige are much more complex than are currently envisioned in the literature. I want to consider other states of existence by revisiting the social landscape of whiteness through the voices of informants, recognizing that they live their lives involved in domination and subordination through the grid of whiteness and blackness but also outside of the grid, too.

Whiteness as a category needs to be interrogated. It is important to unpack the varied dimensions of whiteness in order to understand how class, gender differences, and sexual orientation, among other dimensions, have altered white experiences. I believe there are other ways of contemplating whiteness outside of its links with privilege and power. I have already discussed how whiteness is pitted against blackness as oppositional discourses. To follow from that premise, then, whiteness is positioned as a place laden with advantages, and colour is thereby disintegrated to embody deficit or lack. I wish conceptually to subvert this notion by citing some specific examples where whiteness is not seen as a site of privilege and power.

Some informants chose to contest the dominant representation of whiteness by challenging the notion of whiteness as a site of privilege and power, reconfiguring power relations between whiteness and blackness. In the rest of the chapter, I will attempt to unveil the particular characterizations associated with whiteness.

The literature on whiteness stakes a great deal of its legitimacy upon its status as an oppressor identity, reifying it as an essentialized category. The existing discourses on whiteness position subjects in terms of a relationship between power and disempowerment (Anderson 1996). In chapter two, "Racial Refiguring", I expressed discomfort with these characterizations. Many participants in this study who were raced as white experienced privilege and prestige, as Naela wryly noted:

Well, I think a lot of people look as white as cultureless. That's the first thing if you're white. And you don't really have culture. But you have power. So do you want power, or do you want culture? Which do you want, which is more important to you?

However, they were also quick to point out alternative circulations of power, defining other sorts of discourses and promoting alternative subject positions for racialized subjects by exploring multiple mappings of power. There are many layers of privilege at play for women who are seen as both white and black in particular places. One of the discoveries that starts to unfold is that what appears to undermine privilege in one domain can be re-framed and re-read as the enactment of privilege in another.

In my methodology, I alluded to the work of Gibson-Graham who insists that power is everywhere inscribed (Gibson-Graham 1996). Consider Marical, for example, who lives the ironies of a racist society. She dislodges the perception that those who are seen as white always experience privilege. Indeed, although she is read as white in particular places, the perception of her phenotype as someone who is white can be detrimental.

It doesn't work for me to just have black or white as categories. You know, it doesn't - you shift, I think, you - your identity's always, you know, change depending on where you are. And the thing is like, this is just such a, such a thing that I'm slaughtered for saying or will be slaughtered for saying, but it's not only those categories that indicate where you are in your life. Like I think in the greater society certainly, white has privilege, middle class has privilege, straight has privilege and male has privilege, and I would never argue that. But in specific communities, it doesn't necessarily work like that, I don't think. And in a specific context, in a specific community of black people, I feel really isolated and really not that I have a lot of privilege. And I will [notice] my privilege when I step out of that community into the greater world, and I know that people will probably listen to me more because I am, you know, I'm fair and this and that and the other. So it's such a difficult terrain to negotiate in terms of power because you know, power means different things in different contexts. But I don't want to, I don't want to diminish what power means in a greater social context or, or you know, challenge the idea at all that this world is basically a white, middle class male world dominated. You know, I do not want to, don't want to challenge that at all. But I just think it's not always, always like that. You know what I mean? And difficult.

Marical explains that she has experienced alienation from the black community for not looking "black enough" because of her partial European heritage. Thus, she explains that while she can experience white privilege at times, within the black community, she has been stigmatized for

being multiethnic. Some participants who were of European and African mixes frequently experienced a series of paradoxical tensions engendered by colourism in black contexts (Streeter 1996). Because a white phenotype is valued within some black communities, those participants who were light-skinned experienced privilege - albeit in insidiously heterosexual ways (Twine 1996) in the form of hypersexualized attention from black men, and hostility from black women. For Marical, "looking like a white girl ain't so great all the time" (Moraga 1981:141). Marical feels the danger lies in *making assumptions regarding the values attached to racialized categories and ranking oppressions associated with those categories accordingly*. Marical is discussing the very particularities of oppression, which I would argue can only be unravelled through an indexing of particular place-specific encounters with the racialization process. Marical's narrative documents multiple intersections and spaces between disadvantage and privilege, pointing out some of the contradictions of being read as both white and non-white in various spaces. While she admits that she is light-skinned, and is read as white in some places, she also insists that her fair skin can be read as a liability.

The notion that there is something called the "white experience" that can be described independently of other aspects of social life, like class and sexual orientation, is untenable. To do so, one must assume that whiteness is a distinct category, the impact of which can be neatly separated. The experience of multiethnic women tells stories rife with contradiction and paradox. Racial identities are not essentially or rigidly fixed as is often thought. Rather, race operates as a field of power on multiple levels, where whiteness is not always associated with privilege. It also works on the basis of many other variables which disintegrate and recompose depending upon time and space. We need to develop more nuanced understandings of whiteness which take into consideration how race, class and gender are simultaneous social processes that shape all social relations where multiple positions may privilege, subjugate and dis(empower) all at the same time. Multiethnic women in this study trouble the seemingly consensual understandings of domination, power and privilege arising from one-dimensional race analyses (Anderson 1996). Attributing particular hierarchical social values to the dimensions of blackness and whiteness do not necessarily hold for Marical. She acknowledges her position of power as a woman that can be seen as white in particular places. At the same time, she refuses to see these

views as normalized. Instead, they are problematized and recognized as containing series of ideas about social hierarchies.

These women imagine race and power very differently, revealing new sorts of contemplations of power systems and privilege. In the next section, I will more fully unveil the invisibility of whiteness by showing how whiteness literally “marked” participants. Whiteness is contemplated as a site of disadvantage by informants and I will demonstrate how they move away from whiteness in particular places.

5.6 THE PUBLIC AND PRIVATE DIMENSIONS OF WHITENESS

In this section, I hope to address Bonnett's concerns that we need to stop finding whiteness normal and unexceptional by dislodging the presumption that whiteness is “mainstream, non-exotic, and boring” (Bonnett 1997:199). I do so by uncovering the invisibility of whiteness and pointing out how participants clearly acknowledged the *public* privilege that can attend white skin. However, in their day-to-day *personal* lives, they deliberately take pains to disrupt others' readings of themselves as white.⁴ Women in this study employ innovative coping strategies to negotiate and subvert racial and cultural membership, transforming their social ambiguity into complex identities. For example, Naela revealed a particular situation where she had to navigate carefully through people's perceptions of her as a white woman, where multiple perks did not necessarily attend white skin:

⁴ It is important to note that there are many other stories that could be told here about the experiences of whiteness. I have only chosen to focus upon the ways women in this study disrupt perceived readings of their light skin - if they can in fact “pass” for white - which of course was not always the case. Indeed, some of the women interviewed explained that in their adolescence, they could often “pass” as white and it wasn't until they were older that they decided not to identify with the dominant group. I suggest that there are many factors which play a role in how women choose to identify and I refer the reader to Twine (1996) for a provocative analysis of factors influencing the racial identification choices among “mixed race” girls in Berkeley, California. I also touch upon many of these issues in my next chapter, “I'm a blonde haired, blue eyed black girl: mapping mobile paradoxical spaces”.

Last summer I worked for this theatre group doing popular theatre, like social justice work. And every time we would talk about a white system, like systems of power, people would like sorta, look at me? Or whatever, or if anyone made a comment about a white person, they would all look at me and see my reaction? And even though I told them about my background, what it was, and they knew how I felt, they still thought there was an element of spying in what I was doing there? And also, or they thought I was about to burst into tears, because it's like "Hey, I'm partly white! Don't say those things!" So I had to make it VERY clear, like one day, finally, I just got so sick of it. Because everyone was just sitting there staring at me, anytime anyone said the word "white". Like literally, everyone would just stare at me. So I just said, "Listen. I understand what you're talking about. I'm not, like don't look at me like that!" (laughter) I can deal with this. You're not offending me personally. And I don't feel that, I don't identify as white. And it was really complicated. And I felt, I still feel odd about the whole situation. And then, so it really affects the way I perceive things and the way I can work with people? Like it affects everything.

Naela's participation in the anti-racist theatre group abruptly challenged and precipitated a shift in the way she constructed and thought about her racial identity. At the same time, however, she experienced resistance and hostility from this particular politicized community of colour when she tried to claim a non-white racial identity. When she was not encouraged to embrace and assert a non-white identity because she was perceived as white (read: racially neutral) she developed her own strategy in order to explain to the group that she did not personally self-identify as white. Naela's encounter with the anti-racist theatre group effectively demonstrates how those multiethnic individuals who look white will at times face difficulty in gaining acceptance by people of colour by virtue of the attitudes and feelings that are projected upon them because of what the oppression that white skin symbolizes to people of colour (Root 1990).

Whiteness in this arena meant being associated with people who are in positions of structural advantage and privilege - and being void of ethnicity. Naela wanted to disassociate herself from those notions. Naela saw herself as being marked - not as a person of colour, but as someone who might be seen as being racially neutral within this particular arena. She challenged the prevailing viewpoint among members in the group by voicing her desire to, in her words, combat systems of power. Naela is rallying against the notion of racial neutrality and the importance of assigning everyone a place in the deconstruction of racism. For surely it would be ridiculous to assume that everyone who is white colludes in the production of oppressive power relations -

or to say that every person of colour resists hegemonic discourses. Naela clearly echoed these ideas in her narrative, insisting:

In the last ten years, [I've tried] to separate myself from whiteness? Whiteness is something I've sorta conditioned to see as something not part of me? In a sense? It also means to be more, part of the structure or the system. And who controls the government, and the business, and the city in this country? Actually another one is definitely like colonizer.

Naela counters her own white privilege and the systems that create and offer it to her by conditioning herself as not seeing it as something which is part of her. Ignatiev (1996) might designate her a “race traitor”, someone who is normally classified as white, but who defies the rules of whiteness so flagrantly as to jeopardize her ability to draw upon the privileges that often accompany white skin. Naela deliberately opposes the race line, repudiates her own race privilege, and jeopardizes her standing in whiteness in particular situations. By doing so, she begins the process of destabilizing the construction that society relies on to preserve the current system of racial subordination.

I want to briefly draw some parallels here between participants' desire to move away from whiteness and gay and lesbian individuals' struggles against hegemonic heterosexual discourses. While Bell and Valentine indicate how many lesbians, for example, “manage their identities in order to ‘fit’ within the boundaries of heterosexual discourse” given the regulatory regime of stigmatization (Bell and Valentine 1995:146), I was surprised to find that many participants did not choose to “fit” their identities into prescribed racialized slots like whiteness when they could, in fact, pass. Naela effectively disrupts the assumption that multiethnic individuals who are part European and can pass as white will be very likely to strive for this racial identity in order to have maximum social power to escape the oppression directed towards people of colour. I argue that these particular participants could choose to move away from whiteness but that these decisions are largely influenced by the ways they are privileged through other social axes, like class, where the majority of women interviewed were well-educated.

Like Naela, many informants *publicly* acknowledge whiteness as a site laden with privilege, echoing the ideas of feminist theorists. However, *privately*, they read their whiteness as

disadvantageous, a site they want to move away from personally. As a result, they have developed particular strategies to disassociate themselves from whiteness. They acknowledge both the power of hegemonic discourses while insisting on the possibility of resistance, creating a space where difference is tolerated, even celebrated, as a position of privilege. These women make a political choice not to align themselves with whiteness, and by doing so, revoke whiteness as an ontological category.

I now will demonstrate how informants employ particular strategies in order not to be seen as white in particular places. I will challenge Appiah's claim that "nothing you do to change your appearance or behaviour can change the past fact that your ancestors were of some particular origin" (Appiah 1997:79). I explore some of the ways in which these women employ specific markers - both visual and verbal - in order to appear less white in particular places. Although they are often perceived as white in some situations, they deliberately dislodge that perception by adopting certain visual cues - either by dressing up in a particular way or by changing their name - to appear less white. Clearly, whiteness is only partially about skin colour because these women have been seen as non-white in particular places. This fact is illustrated through the diverse forms of racism they experience as demonstrated by Davy:

Minelle: What does it mean to look mixed?

Davy: It just means that, it means a lot of different things. It depends on where you live, and what your culture is. And for me, it's just meant that there's been issues of confusion, sometimes on my part, and sometimes on other people's parts. It means that I don't get some of the reaction that people who are fully black get, that I do get privilege because I don't look that dark. Or that black. There are things that I don't see, or that I don't experience, that other people do. But I've experienced a lot of very blatant racism and discrimination in my life.

As I have explored earlier, Davy, like Marical is explaining that as a multiethnic individual, she experiences privilege on a fluctuating plane. At times, she experiences privilege that attends white skin. Yet at other moments, she is racialized as a black person. In certain contexts, informants in this study appear as white and they deal with this strategically, developing ways to appear less white by adopting particular cultural signifiers.

Marical shows how she adopted certain styles of clothing and accompanying jewellery in order to move away from perceived whiteness in her communities of colour. Dress serves both to unite and separate people from each other (see Eicher 1995). Included in a repertoire of potentially oppositional strategies are the ways participants choose to dress or how they wear their hair. The donning of particular costumes is used as an indicator of collective identification to publicly project a particular ethnic identity as Marical explains:

And you know, a lot of times when I was like younger, I used to wear an African medallion on my neck. Or I feel sometimes (I don't do this though, for other reasons) but you know I should wear like an Ashanti cloth or I should wear a specific signifier because I don't want to be mistaken for someone who's white. I don't want to be that invisible. I don't want to have to feel like I'm hiding something when I'm not, and the worst thing that always happens to me, and it just upsets me to no end, like I still haven't developed a thick enough skin, is I've had a lot of flack all my life from members of the black community. It's like I don't know who the hell she thinks she is, she thinks she's white. And you know, for at least the last decade, all my fucking life has been devoted to aspects of black culture, you know, and there's no way that anyone who had ever talked to me would get that idea. It's like just so preposterous. But just by looking at me, people are, well she thinks she's white. And it's like well fuck, I can't do anything. You know what I mean? Except for stay out in the sun for longer. You know, and then I'm just going to get skin cancer. You know what I mean? Like I wish I was three shades darker but I'm not, you know, and it's such a ridiculous thing. But it comes down to something that basic. Like if this skin of mine were like a couple of shades darker, things would be different, you know, or at least a little bit different, a lot different, but they're not. It's not in my features, it's not the way I am, it's just that my packaging doesn't fit with my insides, you know, and that's really - that's like a difficult, difficult thing.

There are several threads of whiteness and blackness tangled in the above narrative. Earlier in the interview, Marical explained to me how she has often been positioned as “the token ethnic” by virtue of her phenotype. Here, however, she explores the ways she has experienced hostility from the black community who race her as white, her racial authenticity continually challenged and contested by virtue of her light skin. Marical experiences the razor’s edge of racialized categories. By insisting that her “packaging doesn’t fit with her insides”, she is explaining how her phenotype clashes with her politicized identification as a “black” woman. Marical also expressed frustration with her hair as a signifier of whiteness. As such, she has toyed with the idea of cutting it or changing it, but despaired that by doing so, she would look “more white”:

And my hair's all frizzy, you know. But see, everything is like so bloody political, I think, when you're mixed race. Everything, your whole body, is like is a political terrain. I'm tired of my hair. My hair's driving me crazy, okay? I've got this like big bush of a head of hair. And I wanted to dye it something, you know, I thought okay, I'm going to dye it blonde. But I, you know, I'm really torn about that. I'm like oh my God, well is it going to make me look like I'm more white or is, you know and I don't want that. Or like everything, like the decision to grow my hair, my decision to cut my hair. What if I cut all the curl out, then people will think that I'm white. You know what I mean? Like it's like this major thing. I can't ever be - not, I can be comfortable in my skin but I mean it's just like this weird thing cause it's all like appearance and identity and people's screwed up notions.

The failure to acknowledge the space between whiteness and blackness hides the reality that many women with lighter than black skin colour may provide some women the option of passing as white. Marical expresses deep discomfort with the idea of passing as white, clearly indicative by her tentative contemplations with streaking her hair blonde. For Marical, passing as non-white depends on a series of visual markers - ranging from her Ashante clothing, jewellery or her hair. When such visible markers are removed, the non-white person can pass into the "currency of normative whiteness" (Butler 1993b:170). Marical wants to move away from her ability to adopt that currency. Although she is often perceived as white in some situations, she deliberately attempts to dislodge that perception by adopting certain visual cues to acquire ethnic group membership, emphasizing her identification with particular cultural practices. Marical acknowledges that she can, at times, wear the "backpack of privilege" (McIntosh 1989). However, she reads this dubious carte-blanche entitlement as a sign of remaining invisible. In this way, whiteness is dislodged as something desirable for Marical.

It is the recognition of the physical signifiers of particular features as European, and their significance, which is subsequently rejected by women of multiethnicity. They indicate a movement among multiethnic women to distance themselves from the normative currency of whiteness and clearly illustrates how physical characteristics (signified by skin colour or jewellery or name changing) have been conflated with racial authenticity.

Some women went so far as to change their names in order to appear less white. Their invisibility is doubled as they are hidden behind Anglicized names where because of their

phenotype, they are judged to be of European ancestry. As Ang-Lygate notes, "Eurocentric naming practices render us invisible to each other, robbing us of pre-immigration identities, thus limiting opportunities for mutual recognition, affirmation and validation of our diasporic identities" (Ang-Lygate 1997:180). Some participants changed their names to identify with their particular states of non-cultural neutrality. Rhiannon told me how she changed her name during college:

I made a conscious decision to use my mother's maiden name. I think it was largely because I wanted to, in some way, make it obvious that I was of Chinese decent from one side of my family. I think that it's been a common experience for me for people to assume that I'm white, you know, nothing but white, not mixed race at all. I was getting kind of tired of that. I wanted to at least have it in my name that by name I had Chinese ancestry and so that's when I started using my Mother's maiden name as my last name.

Rhiannon's light eyes and brown hair often concealed her Asian ancestry, and as such, she was positioned as white outside of her family. She reinscribed her public self by changing her name. Thus, a different public persona emerged, re-coding the way that people positioned her. In this way, she was no longer seen as being culturally neutral. Instead, she chose to position herself as culturally distinct from her peers. Changing her name was Rhiannon's way of empowering herself. Marical expressed similar sentiments in having a name that was not traditionally associated with whiteness. For her, she saw her name as a symbol of her move away from whiteness:

My middle name is Jane. But like Marical is just not an Anglo name and I really like that. I like the fact that, that I'm identified by my name as not being white.

By changing her name, Marical actively sought a verbal marker to render her entrance into a particular community of colour. Some participants displayed an ability to comprehend the very real links between whiteness and privilege. At the same time, they expressed to me that their perceived whiteness is often a liability and thus they deliberately dislodge perceptions of themselves as white by adopting particular cultural cues. The decisions that are made regarding these choices are always in flux because women in this study are racialized in such dramatically different ways dependent upon a variety of factors.

5.7 CONCLUSION

“What do we look like when we try to inhabit the shades of grey? Are we driven beyond ourselves when we set out just to be ourselves? Black or white, invisible or conspicuous...raced or nationed...Who are we when we are seen but not spotlighted, when we matter but not so much that the mattering drives us mad?” (Williams 1997:28)

In this chapter, I have tried to complicate the emerging literature in “white studies” by explaining that although it has successfully interrogated the construction and enactment of whiteness and white identities (Frankenberg 1997; Delgado and Stefancic 1997) it has also witnessed the development of an increasingly narrow and fixed view of the borders and meanings of the term “white”. I explained that much of this literature invokes the black-white binary, where race becomes the marked term designating “black” or “people of colour”, while “white” remains the unmarked site of privilege. Although there are, as I have mentioned in chapter two, important historical and ideological reasons for the pervasive power behind this binary, I have suggested that its continual redeployment obscures the complexity of the varied experiences of racialization among informants in this study.

Missing from this literature is an understanding of multiethnic individuals, whose day-to-day encounters with varied processes of racialization spill outside this relational discourse. The policing of whiteness and the construction of essentialized boundaries around racial identity has implications for multiethnic women. Those who see themselves (and are seen) as neither black nor white, yet sometimes both simultaneously, are often effectively erased on racialized terrain. Informants shed light upon the contradictions of an hollow racialized discourse. Their stories illustrate the impossibility of being fixed by a single label when you are doubly racially marked.

There are particular ways in which women who are multiethnic articulate the multiple tensions surrounding their ethnicity within this increasingly two-tiered discourse. These womens' identifications with whiteness shifts through different spaces depending on the tensions of race, gender and class. It is embodied through a series of tangled knots and roots. The tensions pulling on these knots shift and change daily. Their deliberation of their own ethnic identity is a strategic response to a shifting sense of time and place.

Multiethnic women in this study revealed a capacity to employ a wide range of individual and personal strategies to combat particular readings of their whiteness by showing how attributes normally associated with whiteness - namely, white skin and privilege - are constructed in specific ways. I have attempted to show in this chapter how women of multiethnicity trouble the spaces of whiteness. Clearly, racial identity among participants can be malleable and fluid, not static. Depending on particular social contexts, their personal and public affiliation to whiteness shifts. These women open up possibilities for self-definition and political engagement by illustrating how whiteness is attained and membership assigned in particular sociological and economic contexts. I am reminded here by the narratives of Marical, Davy and Naela in particular, who explained that in particular communities, their whiteness is read as a liability. It is the ability to grasp the subtleties of these situations and choose the most effective strategy of the moment to transcend these boundaries which has concerned me in this chapter.

Paying attention to these nuanced dynamics allows us to think in terms of allegiances and connections as opposed to fragmentation and dissent, aiding in the avoidance of potential essentialism through a complex exploration of how processes of racialization are always shifting. This chapter has attempted to make space for the co-existence of different meanings (Bondi 1997) in a more precise exploration of the racialization process, where meanings associated with racialized categories (like privilege and power) fluctuate in different places and are constructed in various ways. To conclude, I want to ask about future points of departure. These narratives begin to offer up one way of imagining what Gillian Rose deems a paradoxical space (Rose 1993a). By paradoxical, Rose means that spaces would be mutually exclusive if charted on a two dimensional map - centre and margin, inside and outside occupied simultaneously. They articulate specific arguments about power and identity. There are other axes of social identity between these spaces of whiteness and blackness which have not yet been fully contemplated, potential places of dialogue which go beyond the dominant discourses of identity. The next chapter will attempt to address Williams' disquieting questions regarding inhabiting the shades of grey by further exploring Rose's ideas and examining how multiethnic women in this study develop unusual allegiances across racialized divides by employing the term "mixed race" to describe themselves in everyday dialogue.

CHAPTER SIX

“I’m A Blonde Haired Blue Eyed Black Girl”:
Mapping Mobile Paradoxical Spaces

6.1 INTRODUCTION

“How are we going to find an *adequate symbolic language* to account for the fractured and plural identities of those...who participate in several cultures?” (emphasis mine, Simon 1991:23)

In chapter two, I explained how the multiethnic woman was made intelligible through the prism of an oppressive racialized hierarchy which has historically positioned her as “out of place”. The desire for assimilation into her parents’ ethnic groups is popularly read as the trademark of the individual’s experience of multiethnicity. In this chapter, I engage with ideas in feminist theory and participants’ narratives to develop some new ways of interpreting the experience of multiethnicity.

This chapter chronicles a more productive way of looking at the subject by exploring how multiethnic women inhabit what I call “mobile paradoxical spaces.” I propose this spatial metaphor in order to demonstrate some of the more complicated and unconventional alliances multiethnic women forge outside ties to their own ethnicities. In other words, I want to think about how we might envision the multiethnic women in the centres of their own cartographies, rather than further reinscribing them as out of place.

Firstly, I will explain why I have coined the term “mobile paradoxical spaces” through a discussion of the work of two theorists, Gillian Rose and Elspeth Probyn who have largely influenced my thinking in this chapter. Secondly, I provide examples of the ways which my informants occupy these mobile paradoxical spaces by exploring their attachment to the identification of “mixed race” - a label they negotiate, challenge and contest daily. I suggest that narratives provide an exemplary site for examining the “constitutive contradictions” (Kendo 1997:55) of identifying as “mixed race”. Thirdly, I hint at how women in my study further occupy mobile paradoxical spaces by actively creating alliances with others, often transcending socially constructed lines of difference.

As I have demonstrated in chapter two, the public imaginary of the multiethnic individual is often marked by a relentless negativity. The popular discourse is made up of a series of myths which explicitly pronounce the multiethnic individual as “out of place” or having “no place to call home” (Tizard and Phoenix 1993; Root 1992) which fractionalizes the multiethnic person’s experience.² Although the “out of place” metaphor is a tired one, it still fuels the dichotomous and divisive situation in critical race theory. “Out of place” brings to mind images of isolation, fear, dread, terror, loneliness or despair (Cresswell 1996). This tendency to focus upon multiethnic individuals’ “problematic” nature, through the use of phrases like “marginal”, “groupless” or “not fitting in” reflects a pervasive psychopathology.

Much of this discourse derives from ideas about a person’s attachment to their ethnic community. It presumes that people of shared ancestry necessarily share a common bond. However, as I have argued in previous chapters, shared ethnicity does not mean congruency of interest. We effectively deny or devalue other social axes of difference when we reduce individuals to their ethnic identity. As Ifekwunigwe remarks, “the [multiethnic] experience of multiple identities, which are necessarily contradictory, socioculturally constructed and essentialized, demand new paradigms for looking at belonging” (Ifekwunigwe 1997a:127).

In this chapter, I respond to Simon’s challenging question by attempting to develop a new spatial metaphor³ to counter the dominant popular imaginary. I want to offer sharper

²It is imperative to note that this is only one characterization of the multiethnic individual. Another myth within the popular imaginary dictates that the multiethnic individual has the solution for the world’s racist problems (Nakashima 1996). Often, the multiethnic individual is caught between these two representations, which further positions her as “out of place”.

³There are other spatial metaphors associated with a multiethnic identity. Root, for example, uses the metaphor of “border crossing” to highlight the shifting of foreground and background (Root 1996:xxi) a concept I

explorations of the multiethnic experience by mapping out the rapidly shifting modalities of forces that shape everyday life. Thus, I turn away from the inside/ outside model of exclusion (Sibley 1995) as a guide for thinking about the complex patterns of social relations.

The model of inside/outside necessitates rendering singular the object for inquiry. It does not allow for a vision of the interconnectedness between supposedly discrete entities, effectively totalizing the diversity of social life by setting up an opposition between authentic/inauthentic social relations (Young 1986). I am much less interested in where informants feel out of place than where they feel *in place*. I want to talk about the productive spaces that are created out of desire to create connections. I embrace Probyn's definition of desire, where desire is "a method of doing things, of getting places...desire here is *the mode of connection and communication between things*, inevitably giving way to the literalness of things" (emphasis mine, Probyn 1996:41). There are other varied and diverse senses of belongings which call out for the need to develop a more reflexive, spatialized vocabulary to weave together these colourful tapestries of identity.

As I have commented in chapter two, in order to provide a more accurate account of how individuals move in the social world, I believe that we need to transcend particular discourses of identity which seek to allocate belonging through a certain articulation of difference. "In the face of the fixity of the categorical logic of identity" (Probyn 1996:9), I suggest a perspective that turns away from conflict, divisions and difference towards notions of alliances and affiliations and unity. To do so, I propose the notion of mobile paradoxical spaces which suggests how participants articulate their experiences of being propelled into forms of living with others by creating and fashioning coalitions.

explore in greater detail in chapter seven, "Tricking the border guards: performing race". However, in this chapter I focus upon the development of a new spatial metaphor in light of my informants' revelations.

In this chapter, I will suggest that mobile paradoxical spaces are an inherent part of my informants' daily existences. These identifications serve as a "marker of...contemporary social fluidity and dispossession [and] a.. new stability, self-assurance and quietism" (Young 1995:4). Through the interpretation of my informants' stories, I will attempt to answer the following questions:

- * What are mobile paradoxical spaces and can they be mapped through narratives among multiethnic women in this study?
- * Are there ways of being that take pleasure in transcending traditional modes of identity formation?
- * How can we demonstrate pluralities of belonging outside the familiar markers of race, class and gender?

6.2 DEFINING MOBILE PARADOXICAL SPACES

"Home is no longer just one place. It is locations" (hooks 1990:141)

"Belonging cannot be housed simply within the material space of walls and roofs, of fenced topographies and well-drawn maps" (Mufti and Shohat 1997:1)

My metaphor of mobile paradoxical spaces is inspired by the work of two feminist theorists: Gillian Rose and Elspeth Probyn. In particular, I combine Rose's "paradoxical space" (Rose 1993a) and Probyn's exploration of "outside belongings" (Probyn 1996) and I examine these concepts in this next section.

Firstly, however, I should explain briefly why I have coined a new spatial metaphor, especially given my earlier critique of spatial metaphors in chapter two. I was initially reluctant to invent a new expression to describe the multi-textured belongings forged by my participants for fear of creating another vacuous identity category. I was constantly aware of a nagging thought as I listened to these womens' voices ringing with laughter on my tape recorder. Nandy's astute observation of the work of social scientists resonated, where he notes that instead of admitting the failure of our categories, we prefer to clobber our empirical experiences until they fit those categories (Nandy 1983). Given that women in this study adamantly objected to being "boxed" within certain categories of identity, I was especially wary. The last thing I wanted to do was

coin a new phrase and then rifle through transcripts. Instead, the metaphor of mobile paradoxical spaces has emerged through the long-term process of engaging with transcripts, theorists, and my own experiences of multiethnicity. I hope that it hints at my discovery of the potential coalitions which can be forged among these elements.

Secondly, I am aware that many cultural geographers have pointed out the limits of spatial interpretations for theoretical analysis (Smith and Katz 1993). Keith suggests that there is a “seductive danger of creating a false duality between the world of metaphors on one hand and a world of reality on the other” (Keith 1991:182). However, I deliberately use this metaphor to illuminate the social worlds of participants because I firmly believe that “theory without practice is empty but *practice without theory is blind*” (my emphasis, Trotsky in Keith 1991:179). Thus, holding together the two different sites as proposed by Rose and Probyn may give us pause for more productive reflection upon the complex and contradictory relationships within the social. I hope the reader will discover some unexpected resonances between the real-life worlds of participants and the writing worlds in the academy.

Lastly, in developing the metaphor of mobile paradoxical space, I hope to bridge the inevitable impasse between metaphoric and real space, or “the comfort of the abstract and the relevance of the empirical, the seduction of the ivory tower and the romance of the street” (Keith 1991:182). I stand firmly by Pile’s assertion that one way to contribute to the discipline is by “asking new questions and developing new metaphors” (Pile 1998). I do not read the coining of this new metaphor as an escape from reality. Rather, I envision it as the creation of a legend through which I may be able to map out some untravelled terrain. Through this prism, I hope that the day-to-day realities of participants can be brought to bear outside of previous misrepresentations.⁴ In short, I employ the metaphor because I believe it provides a way to illuminate the continually changing configurations of connections among participants.

⁴ I wish to recognize my own complicit academic stance here as well. In mapping out mobile paradoxical spaces, I am very deliberately delineating borders and boundaries. It is imperative to acknowledge my own collusion as the cartographer who has developed her own legend in coining this metaphor, and I have employed it in particular ways in order to map out these spaces.

In order to explore the dimensions of the term mobile paradoxical spaces, I now turn to examine each of the elements that make it up in turn. Firstly, I begin with “paradoxical”. I was perhaps predisposed to ponder paradox because it has been read as an inherently Canadian trait. For example, in a recent paper, Moss has emphasized that “paradox as a way of coping with complexity is very Canadian” (Moss 1998). Indeed, many literary scholars in Canada have dissected notions of paradox.⁵ However, I focus primarily upon the notion of paradox as developed by feminist geographer Gillian Rose.

As discussed in chapter two, Rose (1993a) made a significant contribution in geography with her book Feminism and Geography. In the final chapter of her book, Rose explores the possibility of a paradoxical space. This chapter resonated deeply with my own experiences as a multiethnic woman, and after reading through my informants’ transcripts, I felt convinced that Rose’s notion of “paradoxical space” was also very useful to describe the spaces forged by women of multiethnicity in my study. I have previously alluded to Rose’s notion of paradoxical space, albeit briefly, in chapter four, in relation to the ways in which women in this study contemplated their association with cultural citizenship; and in chapter five, where participants explored their relationship with whiteness. I will now further elaborate upon many of her themes related to paradoxical space.

Firstly, a short synopsis of the book is useful to put Rose’s argument about paradoxical space into context. Rose’s aim in Feminism and Geography is to question the enduring masculinism that has structured geographic inquiry. The majority of her book demonstrates how masculinity has shaped geographical epistemology as well as the theoretical contributions of the discipline. She develops this argument in the first half of the book through a series of essays where she interrogates two kinds of masculinism within contemporary geography: namely, social scientific masculinity and aesthetic masculinity. It is the last half of the book which I find inspiring:

⁵For further explorations of Canadian identity, paradox and its connections with irony, see Moss (1996) and Hutcheon (1991).

namely, Rose's attempt to develop some possible feminist strategies to counter those sorts of powerful masculinisms inherent to the discipline.

Rose explores some descriptions of oppressive spaces as territories in which women are caught. She suggests that many women's difficulties in spaces might be understood through masculinist claims to know, reflected through claims to space and territory. Clearly, for many women, "being in space is not easy" (Rose 1993a:143) and Rose explains how women experience confinement in space - a recurring image in women's accounts of their lives.

To challenge these oppressive spaces, Rose explores how feminist writers imagine a space beyond this masculinist territorial logic. Citing Gloria Anzaldua (1987), bell hooks (1990) and Donna Haraway (1991) among others, Rose assembles a cross-section of feminist work which challenges masculinisms. In her search for ways to overturn binary conceptions and construct a spatiality which makes room for the experiences of multiple "others" in nonhierarchical arrangements, Rose draws upon the work of feminists bell hooks (1990) and Minnie Bruce Pratt (1984) in particular. Both these writers talk about occupying a doubled position, where one is located both inside and outside, neither here nor there, neither quite belonging yet not completely excluded. These spaces, Rose argues, are inherently paradoxical.

Paradoxical space acknowledges multiple dimensions or ways of articulating "a sense of elsewhere beyond the territories of the master subject" (Rose 1993a:151). The key point is that women are envisioned as being located in several social spaces at the same time - within the centres and the margins - simultaneously. Rose examines the particular paradoxes of occupying these spaces at the same time, highlighting the subversive potential of this position:

"The simultaneous occupation of centre and margin can critique the authority of masculinism...help[ing] some feminists to think about both recognizing differences between women and continuing to struggle for change as women...the spaces of separatism in these discussions...is also a space of interrelations - another paradox" (ibid:152-153)

Challenging insider/outsider positionings, paradoxical spaces "imply radically heterogeneous geometries" that are "lived, experienced and felt" (ibid:140-141), creating "not so much a space

of resistance as an entirely different geometry through which we can think power, knowledge, space and identity in critical, and hopefully, liberatory ways" (ibid:159).

A politics of paradoxical space works towards an emancipatory geography that examines new relationships between power, knowledge, space and social action. Exploring how the subject of feminism depends upon a paradoxical geography in order to acknowledge both the power of hegemonic discourses while insisting on potential sites of resistance, Rose invokes the metaphor of paradoxical space in order to articulate a geography that:

"describes that subjectivity as that of both prisoner and exile; [allowing for an occupation] of both the centre and the margin, the inside and the outside...a geography structured by the dynamic tension between such poles...a multidimensional geography structured by the simultaneous contradictory diversity of social relations...a geography which is as multiple and contradictory and difference as the subjectivity imagining it" (Rose 1993a:155)

To summarize, paradoxical space is imagined as an intervention to masculinist claims of knowing. It evokes one possible geography that focuses upon women creating their own geographies of knowledge, where they are centred as subject and not marginalized as object. Rose explores a different kind of subjectivity, where women are neither victims nor perpetrators of the experiences of displacement. She imagines a reconceptualized territory where women are not positioned as "out of place" but rather as constitutive of their own spatialities - spatialities which do not replicate ancient exclusions in geography.

Paradoxical space gets at the mobility and simultaneity of particular subject positions. I find the idea particularly appealing because it suggests a way to theoretically map a geography which goes beyond dominant and dualistic discourses of identity. Feminist geographers have long identified the importance of moving beyond singular mappings of dualistic social power relations onto territorial spaces, like masculine and feminine onto public and private, for example. Rose recognizes the malady and comes up with a potential cure by suggesting the possibility of a space beyond dualisms.

Rose admits that her argument about paradoxical space remains partial because it surfaces largely from her own rooted experience of everyday places. She is therefore tentative to offer them as part of a new and improved feminist orthodoxy for thinking about space in geography. However, she ends Feminism and Geography by asking:

“for a geography that acknowledges that the grounds of its knowledge are unstable, shifting, uncertain, and above all, contested. Space itself [is] insecure, precarious, and fluctuating... other possibilities, other sorts of geographies, with different compulsions, desires and effects, complement and contest each other. This chapter has tried to describe just one of them. There are many more” (ibid:160).

With that cliffhanger, Rose firmly sets a radical agenda for the future of feminist geography. I initially expected that such a bold call would set off a myriad of responses from feminist geographers. However, no-one has yet attempted to map out the political terrain of Rose's paradoxical space (although see George 1996). I find this ironic, given that many resoundingly concur that Rose's notion of paradoxical space “crackles with possibilities” (Katz 1997:230). It seems many geographers identify with paradoxical space - indeed, celebrate it (see Katz 1997) yet landscapes of paradoxical space have yet to be mapped. Untouched in this manner, paradoxical space sadly sits gathering dust on the shelf of feminist geography scholarship, a concept which is only grounded through theoretical examples in feminist studies.

In this chapter, I want to take paradoxical space off the shelf in order to explore some potentially exciting readings of multiethnicity. Although Rose may read her ideas as partial, I see her discussion as rich and tantalizing, pointing towards the possibilities of describing some new feminist geographies. In particular, many of her ideas about paradoxical space struck a chord with me as a multiethnic woman. I read many parallels between the stories of informants and Rose's idea of paradoxical space, where women in this study explained to me that they see themselves located in a variety of spaces at the same time - spaces which are, all at once, multi-dimensional, shifting, and contingent. The metaphor of paradoxical space helps to illuminate some of these experiences.

Many sections of transcript immediately spring to mind. However, in order to whet my reader's appetite in anticipation of examples of paradoxical spaces experienced among participants, I will

provide just a quick tempting glimpse. I do so by introducing a quote from Marical, who explained how the experience of multiethnicity is rife with paradox:

I'm a blonde haired, blue eyed black girl, you know? That's a strange positioning to be... I exist against all odds. You know, in a lot of ways? Unfortunately, (laughter) my very existence stares all these basic theories about human existence right in their face. Like it challenges that. So your physicality, your whole body, totally, you know, challenges the idea that races shouldn't mix, that this is the way things are, that these facts exist, that the truth exists in this way. Because if all this were true, then I wouldn't exist. And I exist, therefore it cannot be true. You know it's like this total, it's ridiculous! It's like this existential nightmare! We are existential nightmares! (laughter)

Marical's mere existence trumpets a wake-up call to those who continue to falsely assume that racial categories exist as discrete entities. Yet the racialized hierarchy refuses to acknowledge her presence. Living in this space is not easy - it is, as Rose reminds us, precarious and fluctuating. But it is not completely hard, either. As I hope to show, Marical refuses to solely locate herself within a marginal space. Instead, she adopts a productive stance structured by the diversity of social relations. Marical inhabits a paradoxical space which is as contradictory and diverse as Marical herself.

This is only description of the occupation of a paradoxical space. Like Rose says, there are many more. In order to respond to Rose's call, I will provide more examples among participants in order to work through the possibilities of grounding paradoxical space in the lived world. Thus, I hope to contribute towards an envisioning of space where women of multiethnicity do not see themselves as either "out of place" nor part of a geography of exclusion (Sibley 1995). This is not an easy task. To take on this enterprise, I draw from the work of Elspeth Probyn who complements the work of Rose in her book Outside Belongings. Themes of mobility and paradox thread through both Rose's and Probyn's explorations. In her "sociology of the skin" (Probyn 1996:5), Probyn focuses upon notions of process and movement inherent in forging belongings. She asks how aspiration is played out among individuals, insisting upon the importance of mapping everyday manners of being. I find Probyn's work appealing for three reasons. Firstly, she concerns herself with problematizing the particularities of identity. Secondly, she expresses a desire to spatialize identifications. Finally, she provides a compelling critique of belonging.

Similar to my earlier concerns regarding fragmented and fluid identities as voiced in chapter two, Probyn longs for a term which captures more than the term "identity" can express. In her critique of identity politics (where one is stuck within the fixities of an identity category: as a feminist I should do this, for example) Probyn proposes that we do not live out our lives as general categories. Instead, she hints that varied forms of existence offer alternative modes of belonging which spill over static identity boundaries. Insisting that identity classifications too often slide into modes of difference, where it becomes extremely difficult to talk of gender, nation, minority, majority, sexuality etc. at the same time, she explains that she wishes to further "ground" the particularities of identity instead:

"That identity is problematic is hardly news within theoretical circles, where identity is, of course, fragmented, decentred, and all the rest. However, it seems to me that the discourse of identity as fragmented continues to be abstracted from the local ground in which one lives one's presumably decentred life...I wonder why there is so little discussion of how these factors are embodied and how they play out in Peoria (or Bloomington or Burlington or Regina)" (ibid:71).

Probyn seems almost exasperated by the intellectual hegemony of American scholarship in cultural studies in particular, where the contemporary theoretical tone is one of "nowhereness and everywhere" (ibid:71). Against this disembodied tenor, Probyn encourages us to develop expressions outside of the general to look at examples of specific local embodied practices in the everyday. She is concerned with how identity becomes altered and shaped along the rugged terrain of belonging. She insists that there is no fixed identity nor final destination. Instead, she is fascinated with how it is that people "get along" and that leads her to ask how various forms of belonging are articulated:

"[I am concerned with developing] an ethical practice of belonging and a politics of singularity that must start from where one is - brutally and immediately from one's...modes of being... [so] that we may be able to catch the constructedness of alternative manners...encourag[ing] the movement away from thinking and living difference and specificity as a negative.. to turn identity inside out so that instead of capturing us under its regime of difference as negative measure, the desire of belonging becomes a force that proffers new modes of individuation" (ibid: 23, 90-91)

Probyn calls for new ways of intervening in the social by “outsiding ourselves” (ibid:152). She asks us to bring to the surface particular actions and feelings that are normally hidden even to ourselves. By doing so, Probyn imagines interconnectedness experienced between supposedly separate entities.

Lastly, I am inspired by Probyn’s critique of the term belonging in light of my own work. While I admit belonging can communicate ideas of home, security and stability, belonging is not always a warmly persuasive term. Probyn explains that belonging can convey notions of “longing to be” somewhere, or the desire to be part of something (ibid:40) echoing Foucault’s concerns of “desire = lack”⁶. The implications of this idea for my own work struck me as invaluable. I have previously documented in chapter two how the multiethnic individual has been positioned as “out of place” or, in other words, “not belonging”. This has exacerbated (mis)representations of the multiethnic woman, where she has been made intelligible in oppressive ways. In analysis of my transcripts, I realized that participants did not dwell excessively upon passive or unfulfilled desires to belong. Instead, narratives were littered with stories about active connections forged through movement across social cleavages.⁷ Were there other theoretical ways, I mused, to talk about these processes of creating connections without using the phrase belonging? It was then that I turned to Probyn’s re-appropriation of the term.

Probyn asks us to contemplate notions of belonging as movement rather than as static

⁶Foucault once told Deleuze: “with much kindness and affection...I cannot stand the word desire; even if you use it differently, I can’t help myself thinking or living desire = lack, or that desire says repression” (Foucault in Deleuze 1994:63)

⁷I remind the reader again that this reflects the kinds of questions I asked participants. Because questions remained open-ended, participants had the opportunity to talk about what mattered to them, rather than what mattered to me as a researcher. As such, I suggest that participants in this study focused upon the ways in which they “got on and got by” in a racialized world.

positionings. Like hooks (1990) in my earlier quote, Probyn considers belonging not as fixed nor rooted in not some deep authentic way, but rather as being *in constant movement*. Modes of belonging are envisioned as “surface shifts” as she attempts to capture the range of desiring identities that are displayed “all around” (ibid:20). Her exploration is not divorced from that of paradoxical space. Fundamental to her argument about belonging is the paradox that “any singularity of belonging must continually be freed and encouraged in its movement to constantly become other” (ibid:153). Thus belonging can take on a myriad of forms. Probyn encourages the development of contradictory relations of belonging that may coexist, overlapping in paradoxical spheres.

To summarize, Probyn’s ideas hold particular promise for this study. By positioning the self as a point of departure as opposed to a site of authentic origin, Probyn provides a way to consider transcending traditional definitions of ethnicity. I doubt Probyn would disagree that the multiethnic individual has been positioned as “out of place” in the social landscape. However, I think she would encourage me to move beyond simple inside/outside characterizations to ponder multiethnicity as a productive zone instead of a site of lack. My desire in this chapter is to talk about the productive spaces that difference makes. Probyn’s work provides a springboard towards imagining creative alliances and coalitions in neither solely inclusionary nor exclusionary terms. Her inquiry offers critical insight into contemplating new theoretical spaces, where belonging is imagined as a form which is always in transit or *on the move*.

In this section, I have explained why I have borrowed largely from the work of Rose (1993a) and Probyn (1996) to provide the theoretical underpinnings for the narratives among participants which follow. The phrase “mobile paradoxical space” provides a fairly flexible and rich metaphoric range, and I emphasize its ambivalent, fluid and contradictory nature. I believe the term conveys ideas about contradiction and movement, both of which were key themes emerging from narratives among participants. Keeping this in mind, I ask how might we be able to map mobile paradoxical spaces in relation to participants’ daily lives. What struck me while reading the transcripts were the multiple ways in which participants occupy mobile paradoxical spaces as they go about their daily living - performing the banal chore of grocery shopping in the Quickie-Mart; frantically finishing documentaries under tight time constraints, and frequenting

smoky dance clubs on Friday nights. Participants actively moved away from thinking and living difference as a negative. Rather, they conveyed to me the importance of bridging dynamic tensions among groups. Narratives were sprinkled with stories about the day-to-day experience of making connections with individuals, exploring how it was that strangers became friends (Probyn 1996).

In the remainder of this chapter, I will demonstrate how participants occupy mobile paradoxical spaces. I will argue that mobile paradoxical spaces are not only forged through interrelations with other individuals, but also through participants' relationships with particular personal identifications. To elucidate this idea, I will show how the label of "mixed race" is contemplated as a mobile paradoxical identification for participants. The next section will examine the ways participants identified with, yet at the same time, challenged, contested and sometimes even discarded the label of "mixed race" identity.

6.3 MAPPING OUT MOBILE PARADOXICAL SPACES IN RELATION TO THE IDENTIFICATION "MIXED RACE"

"Our sense of being, or identity and language, is experienced and extrapolated from movement" (Chambers 1994:24)

Before I launch into analysing the ways in which participants in this study contemplated the label of "mixed race", it is important to remind the reader again why I make the distinction between the labels "mixed race" and "multiethnic". As mentioned earlier, I am wary of employing the term "mixed race" to describe participants in this study because I fear that the term reiterates the idea that racial categories are static or impenetrable. I prefer to employ the term "multiethnic" to describe participants. However, the women who participated in the research identified as "mixed race" in the initial request for interviewees. The label "mixed race" is more part of common-day parlance as a personal identification label, whereas "multiethnic" has yet to catch on or take on political clout outside the academic realm. Secondly, the very distinctive educational, socio-economic and cultural privileges of participants cannot be overlooked. The majority of women who were interviewed are members of a distinctive socio-economic service class, as discussed in chapter three, "Same differences? Challenging

insider/outsider positionings". Many of the women I interviewed worked in media and had postgraduate degrees, for example. These varied professional and academic experiences may make them more confident and assertive, thus they are more able to challenge identifications than other multiethnic women who may be economically disadvantaged or ill-educated, for example. The lively debate that ensued around the contestation of the "mixed race" label is very specific to this particular population who had studied at university.

I will now draw upon a series of examples to explain what participants thought about the label of "mixed race". Although all the women who participated in the study had, at some point, identified as "mixed race", it became clear during the interviews that informants chose to emphasize the ways in which they negotiated their use of the phrase in their day-to-day lives. I will show how participants demonstrate the ways they pay attention to the historical, geographical, cultural, psychological and imaginative boundaries which provide the ground for political self-definition, enabling them to speak specific modes of reading and knowing the dominant forces which shape their lives. Most women shift their emphasis in announcing their "mixed race" status from a variety of contexts. These approaches are related to their age and development, as they find that certain of their needs have been met or have remained unmet by a specific approach. They may designate themselves as "mixed race" depending upon a range of factors. Thus, people might change ways of identifying themselves over their lifetime. I demonstrate both the potential productivity and limitations of the label "mixed race" in consideration of the ways it constructs individual, social, and political identities. I will begin to explore the potential of grounding my metaphor by looking at the ways in which my informants contemplated, negotiated and challenged the identification of "mixed race". Themes of mobility and paradox animate these passages that follow. On the basis of the interviews, I propose that informants play with the "mixed race" label, envisioning it as a temporary "linguistic home" across racialized terrains, a kind of way-side station during a long trek, or perhaps a comfortable place for shelter for longer periods of time. Firstly, I demonstrate when participants enthused about the label "mixed race" because it provides a way to convey a sense of their identities outside of the binary racialized vocabulary. Secondly, I explore the ways informants contested and challenged the constraints of the label.

Celebrating the "mixed race" label At times, the label "mixed race" suggests a way to articulate a non-categorical identity outside the racialized discourse. It can interrogate the exclusionary operations by which racialized categories are constituted. My interview with Marical attests to this freedom. Marical was often caught up in the euphoria of "mixed race" possibilities during our interview, sitting on the edge of her chair, waving her hands excitedly describing how the category of "mixed race" provides a way out of the oppositional racialized lexicon:

We need so much to be able to declare... "I'm not black and I'm not white and I don't give a fuck if those are the only two options on the page, okay?" I'm mixed race and I'm not going to fit into the categories that you've built for me. I think that's essential...I like the label mixed race because it recognizes a multiplicity of identities, recognizes that complexity a little bit more than anything else I've come across, I'm very glad the term's come about and I'm really, I really am very firm about it...I get it all the time, "Are you white?" "Are you black?" and it took me a while to get there, but...I'm not, I'm both, I'm not either. I'm mixed race.

Marical demonstrates how exclusionary procedures are called into question by identifying as "mixed race". For her, the term interpellates new kinds of political subjects and offers a more politically vigorous replacement for racist categories. By insisting that she's neither black nor white, but "both, and not either", Marical unveils the subversive potential of a paradoxical position. Her simultaneous occupation of the centre and margin (white and black, inside and outside) produces a paradoxical space, where her identity is imagined as not only located within various social spaces, but also at the poles of each dimension. Her narrative reveals the potential of a space beyond the territories of a master subject. By identifying as "mixed race" Marical refuses to be pinned down to a static model of racial identification, providing an opportunity to trouble racialized categories of identity.

Marical further demonstrated how she uses the identification in the context of teaching. Although Marical is a television producer, she also works part-time in Toronto's inner-city district, teaching disadvantaged youth how to make documentaries with high-8 video cameras. When I asked her how her students identified her, she said wryly: "They think I'm white, or half-breed", and cackled with laughter at the word "half breed". I asked her why she was laughing, and she replied, rolling her eyes:

Because it's just such a ridiculous term! And I always laugh, you know why? Because fuck, the kids that I work with, OK I gotta stop swearing now, the youth that I work with, for the longest time, would say to me, "Are you a half-breed?" And I'm like (with a snarl and a monotone voice) "I'm like mixed race." I'd sit them down, and I'd be like (slowly and purposefully) "Half breed...doesn't belong...in our vocabulary!" (laughter) It's mixed race. And yet it still comes up, over and over again. I mean they don't mean any harm, and it's no big deal. But, yeah.

Our conversation was peppered with these sorts of stories. For Marical, identifying as "mixed race" is a transgressive move, an act which might seem politically peripheral, yet exposes the practices of the dominant majority in ways that mainstream politics often cannot. By communicating this to her students, I believe Marical is occupying a particularly empowering educational stance. She refuses to be objectified as object (intonated through the use of the derogatory phrase "half-breed"). Instead, she claims her own space by flipping the situation around - explaining to the students how she chooses to identify as "mixed race". Marical hopes this act disrupts her students' readings of racial categories.

By identifying as "mixed race", Marical creates her own political option in a social landscape where she is often threatened with racial effacement. In other words, the identification of "mixed race" can offer a crossroads of identification. It redeploys the means through which racialized subjects have been constituted. The label can articulate alternative modes of experience which spill over the boundaries of racialized categories, providing a way for Marical to "write her face" (Kendo 1997:240) and subsequently rewrite the social script of race.

In the narrative below, Makeda encounters a language of powerlessness in attempting to identify herself. She chooses to contest what she experiences as stifling racialized vocabulary. By identifying as "mixed race", her opposition is not only reactive, but also creative and affirmative:

If there was any value in [identifying as] mixed race it's that we can puncture the purisms that exist on either side right? That we can start to show the fallacy of kinda, hermetic racial constructs, that they, these things make sense, and that they are definitive and absolute, and that we kinda defy that? We say, "No (laughter), actually, they're not absolute, um, and that there have been transgressions"... I think it's important to affirm people's experiences, within the racist culture that might deny them the ability to affirm all of their identities.

Identifying as “mixed race” can provide a position from which to articulate and transform social experiences. The term de-institutionalizes the norm of racial categories for Makeda, creating a space within which she can validate her multiple identities. This was expressed through several narratives which stressed the “limitless” aspects of the label which further demonstrates the paradoxical leanings of the identification as Makeda emphasizes:

Well, some days I feel like [the mixed race label is] limitless? I know that's a very strange thing to say, and it's also about subversion... It just seems to be, something that defies absolutes.

In designating the label as a site “beyond capture,” Makeda explores the potential of a place where her identity cannot be pinned down to a particular stereotype. In identifying as “mixed race”, Makeda does not necessarily need to launch into a long history of explanation about her ethnic background. It is therefore an attractive identification to many informants because it offers a way out of identifying with static ethnic delineations towards practicing what Kobayashi and Peake would call an “un-natural” discourse (Kobayashi and Peake 1994). However, while some read the label as limitless, other informants stressed the limits of the term as I will discuss.

Contesting the value of the term “mixed race” In this section, I will address the ways in which participants objected to the use of the label “mixed race” to identify themselves. I do so in order to highlight the paradoxical character of the term. Some informants subjected the label “mixed race” to scrutiny by challenging, contesting and participating in the negotiation of the category. Although all of the women in this study identified as “mixed race” to me in order to take part in this study, I was often surprised at how clearly they articulated their distaste for the term. I want to emphasize that it was not just some women who identified with the term wholeheartedly, while others wholly discouraged the use of the term. Rather, the very same women who were enthusiastic about the label “mixed race” were often, at other times during the interview, highly dismissive of its use. In order to demonstrate these paradoxical proclivities, I will show how participants told me how they thought the label of “mixed race” was constraining in three ways. They explained that the term reified the notion of race, subsumed differences among individuals, and privileged the idea of race over and above other social identities.

Firstly, some women did not want to use the term “mixed race” to identify themselves because the word “race” was problematic to them. During interviews, some informants pointed out the paradox of identifying as “mixed race” as the term can reify social categories. More specifically, they feared that using the term “mixed race” in fact reified the notion of race, validating the socially constructed concept and perpetuating the notion of race as adding value. During a poignant moment with me, Makeda thoughtfully took a sip of her tea, gazed at me straight in the face, and enunciated clearly:

I don't really want another category for mixed race identity. I don't really necessarily want that identity to be codified, because I think whenever race is codified, whether it is considered pure or impure or mixed or whatever... it just facilitates the management of races. We've become a new target group, for studies, and I don't think necessarily that is what exploring mixed race identity should be about...it tends to, support the idea that race is empirical? Like it's so empirical that in fact it's divisible, um, you can add two races and create a new one, and it becomes a science again. And I think we have to take race out of the category of science. I don't really see any point to creating a new category. I don't think that creating a new category actually answers the question. I think it postpones the question.

Firstly, Makeda is subtly, but clearly, telling me that she is concerned about the ways in which multiethnic people are being scrutinized, almost as if under a microscope, as a new group for social analysis. Although I am implicated in this response, I attempted to reassure her during the interview that I share her concerns as I explored in chapter three. I appreciate that at times, the desire for mutual identification in social relations can often create further exclusions.

Makeda further suggests that unless the complicity of “race” is implicated in studies on multiethnic individuals, “mixed race” studies can obscure, and may even prevent, potentially promising epistemological and pedagogical analyses of racialized experiences. She explains how the use of the word “race” reinforces the myth that races actually do exist, without effectively puncturing the myth of racial purity. Makeda is skeptical about encouraging the development of yet another racial category, exploring various political challenges concerning its usefulness. This reminds me of Raymond Williams' work on community, where he claims that the problems of its meanings seem to be inextricably bound up with the problems it was being used to discuss (Williams 1976). As Makeda rightly suggests, creating a new category of “mixed

race" may postpone, rather than address, the paradox of race. It is interesting to note that earlier, Makeda discussed the potential of the term "mixed race" in a positive manner. Hence, it becomes obvious that some women view the term differently in different contexts.

Secondly, some women in this study defy and challenge any one meta-reading of a multiethnic experience. During our interview, Davy accentuated her concern with the ways the term "mixed race" can create unwarranted generalizations about the individuals who adopt it. Davy suggested to me the importance of not homogenizing a "mixed race" experience:

There's a common misunderstanding that anyone who calls themselves mixed race has had very similar life experiences. And it's not like that. We have some common threads, but you know, my experience as a racially mixed person... who grew up in a country where white was the dominant race and culture, and I grew up totally outside of the black culture, my experience is very different from someone who is exactly the same genetic makeup as me, but with who, both parents are black, and who grew up in say, Mississippi. Or who grew up in Domenica. Or who grew up in Germany. You know, a totally different experience. And we can all look exactly the same, but our experiences are different depending on where we were located, geographically.

The very particularity of the "mixed race" experience is emphasized to me by Davy. By talking about the experiences of someone who has lived in Domenica and Germany, Davy is making a distinction in the processes of racialization particular to different places. Someone of identical genetic makeup, as she says, will have a radically different experience in Germany, a country with a long and troubled history of ethnic conflict and tension, than the Dominican Republic, which has a much larger multiethnic population. By making these distinctions, Davy is emphasizing that material realities shape what "mixed race" means. Social conditions in the daily landscape are more complex than the term "mixed race" can encapsulate.

The very experience of living in different places plays a role in how an individual experiences her ethnicities. Clearly, for Davy, location matters! (see Massey and Allen 1984). Depending upon location, she insists that the experience of multiethnicity differs fundamentally. Davy challenges the label of "mixed race" because it projects the potential possibility of drawing all otherness into the whole it endorses. The label obscures the diversity of face-to-face interactions in very different social, economic, political and cultural contexts. Therefore, the identification

“mixed race” can impose a unilateral homogeneity among multiethnic individuals when it is utilized as a unifying category, further fostering the myth of an “authentic” ethnicity and unveiling assumptions about the desirability of racial purity.

Thirdly, many participants expressed their concern over the label “mixed race” to define their racial identity as it tends to privilege “race” or descent over and above other social identities, illustrating a tendency to assume that these women do not engage in life on multiple and often conflicting levels (Ang-Lygate 1997). The literature on “mixed race” has assumed that race dictates identity (Thornton 1996). I do not dismiss the importance of racial components in shaping the development of, and determining the sorts of, interactions the multiethnic person experiences. However, many women in this study feel that race and ethnicity comprise only a single aspect of identity (see Harris, Blue and Griffith 1995). My informants revealed how their experiences of being racialized only represents one dimension of their identity, as Emma and Katya point out:

Overall, the issue of race in my life has been part of who I am, but it's only been part (Emma)

But for all intents and purposes, on a very very surface level, in the way that I can say that I am mixed, half white and half black, which to me does not go anywhere near to defining the reality of it (Katya)

I suggest that Emma's and especially Katya's statement point out the limitations of both race and ethnicity as defining concepts about a persons' identity. Theoretically, feminists still battle with these questions in regard to the complex interweave of race and gender. Many women told me that the “mixed race” label of identity can prioritize “race” as its central analytical category, the primary social relation on which experiences are based and identities constructed. This can privilege race at the expense of other factors, like gender. Participants explained how racial identifications do not represent their entire sense of self. This point was hammered home by Faith and Julia, both of whom insisted on telling me that they see themselves as “more than their race”. In particular, both these women pointed out the salience of gender during interviews with me.

Julia is a filmmaker who was actively engaged in the process of trying to acquire funding for her latest project at the time of our interview. Given that the film was, understandably, the centre of her world at that time, many of her revelations around multiethnicity were framed through her readings of her current production. When I asked her how she read her multiethnicity, she explained:

Right now I think my primary thing is seeing myself first as a woman because even as a woman of mixed minority, of mixed race and being among men of various races, I still am subordinated to those men and I think the fight as a woman to make it transcends all the racial boundaries. And to me, getting the story of women out there first is very much the priority. Like in dealing with [the characters in my film] I am fascinated first and foremost by the woman who is behind him who had his child and who deserted him.

Although Julia identifies as “mixed race” in some arenas, she tells me that in the context of “right now”, she is more concerned with identifying as a woman and all the political struggles that might entail. What I took away from me after this interview were the impossibilities of untangling race and gender distinctions as separate entities, reminding me of Gibson-Graham’s powerful insight that individuals are a “unique ensemble of contradictory and shifting subjectivities” (Gibson-Graham 1996:241) where race and gender are undisputedly co-constructed (Ware 1992).

Faith echoed these sentiments. As we sat munching chocolate-chip cookies on a beautiful sunny day in Toronto, Faith joked on tape that by the time I would hear her voice next, I would be transcribing her very words in a small, damp room in rainy London. When we had almost reached the end of the interview, I stood up and brushed off the crumbs, saying almost as an afterthought, “I think that’s pretty much it.. well, wait, um, what’s the biggest challenge facing you as a woman who is mixed?” Realizing how loaded that question was, I stammered, “well, how do you see your mixed identity...” Before I could change the question, Faith looked at me oddly and shrugged, as if I had been missing the point throughout the entire interview:

You know what, Minelle? Like I said, whether it’s naive or not, I haven’t really felt any challenges in being mixed. I tend to akin myself to the challenge of being a woman. Like I really do identify with that more.

There are a few points I would like to make here. Firstly, Faith was asserting, as she did throughout our interview, that she had experienced very little racism. This fascinated me, because although she insisted that she had not experienced “out and out” racism, like being refused entry into exclusive places, she obviously had been called all sorts of racial slurs throughout her life. She did not, however, cite those experiences as racist. In telling me, “I really do identify with [being a woman] more”, Faith asserts that the challenges she faces on a day-to-day level are more clearly associated with challenging patriarchy, rather than racism.⁸

Other women in the study explored the paradoxes of the “mixed race” label more abstractly, explaining that it can often encourage an essentialised identity that ignores the materiality of other key factors - like class, sexuality, temperament and geography - which are continually being reinterpreted and negotiated in different spheres.⁹ Darius explains that the label of “mixed race” draws attention away from our potential sameness towards furthering the divisive discourse on difference:

Because, of this concern that I have, like is it a good thing to just create a new barrier, another box, around ourselves as “mixed race”? Is it a good thing to call ourselves a community, because then we are basically just creating separation that sort of denies our commonalities as human beings, and I don't feel totally comfortable with that. At the same time I do recognize that we live in a racialized world, that we live in a world that separates us into different races, and makes boxes around us, so as long as there are boxes, then as long as, in exploring it, as long as there are boxes, then it's good for us to be able to find a definition for ourselves as individuals, and within a greater context.

⁸ I wish to make a point regarding my role as an academic researcher in the production of this narrative. Through the phrase “whether it's naive or not”, Faith is making a particular allusion to my more academic readings of race and gender. By practising what I call inoculation - denigrating herself as naive, or less academic - Faith can politely convey to me that she feels I am spending way too much time thinking about the academic issues of race and feminism. Indeed, she told me afterwards that it seemed odd to her that I would study the kinds of dynamics she takes for granted in her day-to-day life. These sorts of exchanges between the (academic) researcher and the (non-academic) researched need to be more fully unravelled in relation to the kinds of information academics gather. I also want to flag my own anxiety as a young and inexperienced academic researcher. Over the course of the interview, I obviously had become sufficiently relaxed - so much so that I suddenly realized at the end that I had dropped my academic stance along the way. I then drastically overcompensated, and stumbled over the phrasing of my question.

⁹ Many multiethnic creative writers have explored this theme. Describing the ways in which a friend would describe himself, Lisa Jones insists that the term “biracial” “wouldn't have been fierce enough, specific enough, or ultimately progressive enough” (Jones 1994:64). As Renee Tajima ironically states in regard to her multiethnic identity: “I was a Cubs fan long before I ever considered myself Asian American” (Tajima 1995:278).

Especially if we can do that while also maintaining the awareness that it does change, and it does overlap, and it does, we have many different identities, within one identity. I certainly, the sum total of my experience of myself is not as a mixed race woman, usually. There are many many things that I identify with. And I would be concerned about that identity if that wasn't the case. You know, I wouldn't want myself to put in such a box that that was my whole identity of myself. That's only my identity in the context of a conversation about race. In a different conversation, my identity is a totally different thing. Which is really, related to a lot of other things we've talked about, in that how geography or situation or circumstance affects how one defines oneself.

Darius effectively explains how the label "mixed race" is fraught with numerous paradoxes. When Darius agreed to do the interview, we initially talked on the phone for an hour, where she emphasized how pleased she was to discover that I was doing a study on multiethnic women. While she recognizes the value of identifying as "mixed race", however, she is also acutely aware that the label can generate new sorts of boundaries, borders and exclusions. In acknowledging the "overlap" among many different identities that make up her identity, Darius explains that she relates to the term "mixed race" in a paradoxical way, depending upon her location and when race is a primary issue. Evidently, it is not a stable identification. Depending upon the conversation she is in, or the place she finds herself, Darius will identify herself differently. Darius emphasizes that although her experience of multiethnicity has shaped her life in important and essential ways, she also has a wide array of other sorts of experiences. These aspects can be swallowed up whole if she only chose to identify with the "mixed race" label as a description of her identity. Darius' variable self is not just a matter of racial identity roles - instead, her reading of her identity changes considerably, as she says, depending upon "geography or situation or circumstance", echoing Probyn's ideas about belonging being forged *on the move* (Probyn 1996).

Other informants who had not been as touched by academic writing associated the label "mixed race" with a proliferation of political correctness which they saw as "poisoning" the social landscape. While they identified as "mixed race" in the initial request for interviews, they revealed during their interview with me their concern that the "mixed race" identification may mean the development of another racial label void of any real political impetus.

I return to Faith's narrative here. Faith agreed wholeheartedly to do the interview but grimaced when I asked her if she identified as a "mixed race" woman. She responded passionately, saying that she absolutely "hate[s] the word mixed, I just hate it. I don't know why, it just seems like this hodgepodge, this mix". She frowned when discussing the label, suggesting that it discourages dialogue among groups and encourages dichotomies:

I think [mixed race] is just another label. That is a label. It's just another social label...If you're a strong, like, you feel strongly, and well developed, and understand who you are, as a person, especially as a mixed person, you have to realize that those races don't divide, define you. What about the whole Indian thing, like you know how you always say, like Indian people are taxi drivers, weird stupid things? You don't fit into any of those labels. You have to understand as a person that you are who you are. I am an ambitious person, or a kind person, or you're all those different things. That's what makes YOU, and if people accept themselves, and realize that, I mean, labels are going to be there, and they are important in the sense that yes, I am some Chinese. And I am some Polynesian. But not try and separate each other, by those things? Well why wouldn't you have a club for, well I guess they do, for philanthropists, people who are generous? Well they do. But then why would we have, why wouldn't we do clubs along those lines, different things on those lines, instead of by race? Yuck, it's annoying. It's getting out of hand, it's getting so political and ridiculous...so yes, it's like another social label...people should try and mix more!

I think the frustration on Faith's part regarding the creation of another label is clearly visible in her last sentence, where she says that things are getting far too political and ridiculous. Faith's thoughts reflect her lack of intellectual engagement in academe, which is mostly how most of the women in this study became aware of the term "mixed race" - in feminist theory courses, for example. The term "mixed race" has not yet become part of the common culture in Canada and Faith's dismissal of the term reflects that. Expressing her exasperation with the label "mixed race", Faith insists upon the importance of defining herself outside of racialized categories, and instead focuses upon her character traits (her kindness and ambition) as ways which more accurately reflects how she feels about her identity. Clearly, for Faith, groupings on the basis of race undermines her sense of her distinctiveness, and assimilates her identity to an essentialized notion of self that she eschews. The paradox of this situation does not elude me. Although prominently identifying with the actual experience of being multiethnic, Faith expresses her concerns about the label of "mixed race" as a pivotal factor in how she reads her life experiences. By saying that "everyone should mix more" Faith suggests that the "mixed race"

label obscures multiple truths about an individual's ability to affiliate to many groups. Faith seemed sceptical about the development of clubs celebrating "mixed race":

Well first of all I think it's ridiculous that they hold meetings. I think it's absolutely retarded. Maybe it can be useful, like I'm enjoying [doing this interview] thoroughly! Like I'm sure if there were three more of the women you interviewed here, we'd have a grand old time chatting. But I wouldn't start a club just so that we could do this once a week, or once a month. It's ridiculous! People need to get beyond those labels, you can't just start creating your own little clubs and weird things.

Faith is subtly conveying that while she feels that a group of "mixed race" women would share some experiences in common, there may not be enough there to warrant the development of a friendship. Faith is loathe to separate herself into isolated compartments, and for her, this would include the label "mixed race". I also add that Faith is claiming the universal (over the particular) in this situation, which can be problematic in its denial of positionality, denying the ways that particular groups have been oppressed can sometimes represent a denial of the strategic necessity for deploying those marked identities in shared political struggles (Kendo 1997) as Darius explained:

I think there's got to be a way to include that possibility, that our being mixed has an impact upon everything else that we do, and on some level recognize that we're having this conversation for the purpose of exploring racial issues. Therefore that is the language within which we're speaking. And, that is just one, that we agree to sort of suspend other things, for the purpose of, developing this one little area. And it's good to have, it's good to speak it. Because then you feel this certain sort of release of remembering that this isn't just yeah, my whole identity. Because then again, identity is such a complex thing. You know?

For Darius, it is important to develop further political consciousness around multiethnicity, clearly indicative by her contributions to, and pamphletting of, the "Mixed Messages" newsletter in Toronto, a bi-yearly compilation of news about multiethnic individuals. Some women, like Darius, seized the term politically, taking the risk of temporary essentialism, in order to identify with what they read as an active political identification. She finds a way to temporarily bridge the impasse between the paradoxes of the "mixed race" identification. I am reminded here by the work of Peter Jackson, who has critiqued the social constructionist approach to race. He states:

"In challenging the naturalness of categories like race...we run the political danger of evacuating the very concepts around which people's struggles against oppression are being organized...we are searching for non-essentialist conceptions of race...around which it is possible to mobilize politically, but we may have to face a dilemma in which we support one argument politically while rejecting its basis intellectually" (Jackson 1991:193)

By discussing the importance of developing "this one little area", and "the language within which we're speaking," Darius emphasizes her interest in encouraging a collective political consciousness for multiethnic individuals, while allowing for the freedom of individual actions among individuals who identify with the label. For Darius, the term "mixed race" can offer, at times, a way of thinking through identity as a "strategic provisionality" (Butler 1992:110). While Darius asserts that the transgressive deconstruction of the "mixed race" category is important, she also emphasizes that if the category of "mixed race" is dismantled, it becomes even more difficult to speak on the behalf of other multiethnic individuals. In her desire to read the label as a political rather than passive identification, she agrees to suspend judgement temporarily, illustrating a strategy of temporary essentialism, where the play of identification can be interrogated with accountability suspended. This strategy might also be framed under the rubric of "arbitrary closure" (Hall 1992) and addresses Kobayashi and Peake's concern that despite attempts to merge theory with practice, strategic essentialism is not so easily accomplished (Kobayashi and Peake 1994).

Like Darius, other participants also explained to me the specific times and places where they use the label of "mixed race" as a political identification. This was often linked to significant crossroads in their lives - going to university, getting married, or having children. Rhiannon studied at a liberal arts college in the United States, and participated in many "women of colour" events during her undergraduate years and even started up a "mixed race" discussion group in Toronto, which she has since disbanded. Rhiannon explained how her university years had a profound impact upon her use of "mixed race" as an identification.

Yeah, I'll use the term mixed race to define myself. I have used it. There was a time when I was in university which, when I really gravitated towards other mixed race women? And we were quite close. And we had some discussions, we would sit around

and had discussions all the time. And for a time I think that was a very comfortable space for me? I'm sorta outside of that now.

By emphasizing how she “still uses it”, “has used it” and is now “outside of it”, Rhiannon indicates some of the backward, forwardness and un-fixity of identity. During our interview, Rhiannon explained to me that after university she entered a very different stage in her personal life, and this, in turn, influenced her personal identifications as well. She no longer fixates upon her multiple heritages, and while she sees it as an important part of her total self, it is not the pressing issue that it may have been for her in college, indicative by her statement that “she's outside of that now”.

Like Rhiannon, Darius indicated to me how she has “moved through” the particular use of the term “mixed race”:

I started using the term “Eurasian”, and maybe I did say mixed, of my own [volition], sometimes, if I didn't want to identify. When Eurasian started not really feeling comfortable, I would say I'm Japanese French Native Irish, like I would just list it off. And let people sort of piece it together how they want to. Or not. But now I say mixed race. I use the word mixed race to identify myself, and that has definitely been a function of all these explorations I've been doing over the last two, three, four years around the issue, and speaking to people, and it's just been the one that has most comfortably fit me. So far.

Darius's reading of the label “mixed race” suggests to me that there is a particular “comfort zone” around the use of the term, indicative by Darius's statement “it's just been the one that has most comfortably fit me. *So far*” (my emphasis). Darius is not denying that there may be a time when she might “grow out” of the identification, but for now, Darius reads the label as a location for the creation of meaning. Like the seizure of the term “black” as a political identification rather than a description of skin colour, informants take “mixed race” as a place “where meaning is constructed rather than simply the place where meaning is discovered” (Alcoff 1988:434). The ways in which participants define themselves changes, depending upon the context. Informants recognize the temporality of experience and the shifting imperatives of identity. These narratives offer the possibility for re-working the label of “mixed race” as a dynamic process. The ground on which these women are identified is continually shifting and changing.

To conclude this section, I interpret that participants relate to the phrase “mixed race” in a mobile and paradoxical way. At some times, they will employ the identification, and at other times, they voice their concerns about the label. Thus, their own relationship with the identification is always constructed in relation to wider cultural and sociological processes. Social, gendered, physical, professional, geographical, and racialized borders (and the rituals which define those borders) become integral in the construction of the label of “mixed race”. This label means many different things to many different multiethnic individuals. It can be seen as a product of struggle, inherently unstable and contextualized, open to critical re-evaluation in light of shifting political priorities. The possibilities of challenging reified racialized categories are illuminated through the use of the phrase for some women. Yet other participants explored the pitfalls of the term, insisting that it can often privilege race as the sole manoeuvring axis for analysis. I have used the work of Rose and Probyn to encourage a more nuanced exploration between these paradoxical relationships among various identities, allowing for questions of identity to be examined in radically different ways. In the next section, I explore how participants fashion mobile paradoxical spaces in relations to individuals. I will show how they create productive sites of alliances and affinities, effectively subverting readings of their multiethnicity as “out of place”.

6.4 MAPPING OUT MOBILE PARADOXICAL SPACES IN RELATION TO OTHERS

“[The answer to the question] who are you?...[could be] how about you? Can we find common ground? Talk? Love? Create something together? What is there around us and between us that allows this?” (Irigaray 1993:178).

In this section, I will argue that the creation of connections between individuals across traditional social cleavages, such as race and gender, are an everyday reality, and that the material engagements of those connections can be theorized more adequately. The discourse on difference acts as a vigilant gatekeeper which hinders the free-flow of dialogue about commonalities. In order to acknowledge and analyze the potential productivity and limitations of the contemporary discourse on difference, I will consider how participants construct alliances and affinities with others.

I have been inspired to explore the ways in which multiethnic forge mobile paradoxical relationships with others in light of feminist geographer Gerry Pratt's critique of Twine's study on "mixed race" girls in Berkeley, California. Pratt wonders: "how do [women of mixed race] define themselves in terms of other communities?" (Pratt 1997:362), urging feminist geographers to contemplate potential points of alliances across racial differences. This section of the chapter attempts to address Pratt's query. I show how informants turn relationships of differentiation into "relationships of creation and innovation" (Foucault 1984:28). Instead of documenting my informants' hypothetical search for home, I want to examine "their appreciation of many homes" (Jones 1994:3). In their interviews, participants abandoned zones of difference and instead focused upon zones of alliance. Many of the women in this study explained that their ability to cross over the demarcations of racial divides made it easier to transcend other social cleavages. Instead of envisioning herself as being "out of place" for example, Makeda suggests how multiethnic individuals have a range of allegiances and homes:

Being mixed defies any sort of absolute characterization that you might have of community, or culture, because they can't really be applied to mixed race people? Because [we] have so many different allegiances, or affinities, or languages, or whatever.

Makeda insists that she forges several networks of connections, explaining how she has other ties too, and the fact that she has these multiple ties in turn create experiences that connects her to others who might have multiple ties. Women of multiethnicity in this study continually demonstrated the fluidity of discursive relations between and within a variety of communities. Given their multiethnic identity, they continually cross racialized boundaries, and that experience leads them to question other sorts of boundaries.

As Makeda suggests, having a wide range of cultural allegiances offers a way for her to transcend any essentialized generalization of her identity. Makeda explains how she actively searches for meeting places in her desire to create connections:

Being mixed is a kinda very interesting place to be. I think it's been very important to make sure that I do attach myself to collectives, in some ways? Because I don't feel that just one speaks to me?

Firstly, Makeda recognizes how her racialized position offers her an unusual vantage point by emphasizing the particular spatiality of the multiethnic experience. Secondly, Makeda reveals that there are many collectives that she finds appealing. Some multiethnic writers have indicated how multiethnic individuals can occupy these mobile paradoxical spaces. The filmmaker Lisa Jones provides a lesson to multiethnic individuals based upon her own experience of multiethnicity:

“As you get older, chances are you will define yourself by your alliances with a multitude of communities. No one community will speak for you completely and no one community should be so static as to not let you share in others” (Jones 1994:65)

Although these women are often positioned as racialized and gendered subjects, they effectively develop scattered mobile paradoxical spaces with a diverse range of collectives over class, race and gender dynamics. Madeleine, for example, narrates a particular episode where she explains she would deliberately forge a mobile paradoxical space outside of expected connections:

Madeleine: I went to a coffee shop, and I walked in, and all the black kids were sitting over there and there was a group of Chinese kids and there were white kids over there and I didn't know where to sit. I had no idea.. I mean, and it wasn't like they were like everybody was talking, it was like the black kids little clique.. I didn't know where to sit. I just wanted to.. I just want a fucking coffee, you know. Anyway, so I got it [to take away] and then I walked around the corner and there was this sort of big open area where kids were like sitting against the wall and stuff and I just sat there and read my book and smoked cigarettes. I mean if I was there now, right, I think I would just pick the nicest place to sit, right. I would do two things, depending on how I felt. I would either just go okay, where's the best place to sit in here. Or secondly, I would go sit with the Chinese kids.

Minelle: Really? And why do you think that is?

Madeleine: Because, people would just.. people would be expecting me to go to one or the other, that's why.

Madeleine narrates a classic adolescent experience, reminiscent of anxiety surrounding one's individual positioning to the cliques in a crowded school cafeteria. However, I want to emphasize that this particular episode occurred when Madeleine was living in the United States, and thus, Madeleine did not know any of the kids personally. This may have meant that she did not have the kind of nuanced information about the cliques at hand. Perhaps this heightened her

experience of alienation in this particular site. However, what interests me is Madeleine's assertion that she would defy socially constructed expectations of where people would expect her to sit. Madeleine demonstrates how she moves through a shifting senses of affiliation, given her age and maturity levels. Although she decided to get the take-away coffee when she was younger to avoid making a decision about where to sit, upon reflection in the present she adds that she would now sit with a third group, outside of her own expected ethnic allegiances, in order to subvert socially constructed stereotypes. In other words, she would exercise her own agency in a social situation to create her own mobile paradoxical space.

Many multiethnic women build bridges with others based upon overlapping fragments of identifications. If informants do have a unique identity as women of multiethnicity, it may well be in their ability to forge connections with others. Naela, a high school student, describes what she makes of her friendships in school:

My two best friends are a South Asian girl, and a Portuguese girl, and the three of us, I mean the three of us came from completely different home situations and backgrounds, and experiences. And usually we were the tough girls and we would beat up on anyone? So we are more bonded by that, and we are also jockish types. Like I haven't really felt like there are other people to go to. Like my school is basically Portuguese, Chinese, and then the bunch of others are basically white. So there wasn't like there were other communities? Of the same numbers I could have? Gone into? I also never really felt that I wanted to...so, those were the people I most wanted to associate with... the way my friends are divided it ends up being by race, but it's more openly by interest. Like, my East Asian friends, or local friends.. my friends are from an array of backgrounds. It's more divided in terms of my interests.

Naela demonstrates that there are times when a multiracial person does not care to fit in with a racial group at all, or relishes their position as groupless (Nakashima 1992:177). Loyalty to a group is not the issue. Instead, it is more about surrounding oneself in an environment which supports the multiethnic woman's interests, or psychological, spiritual, or emotional needs (Streeter 1996). In Naela's case, this would mean spending time with individuals who share her interests.

The multiethnic woman learns to establish her own sense of identity which is not necessarily reflected back within her environments (Root 1997:163). The multiethnic writer Judy Scales-

Trent has described what it is like to be “both inside and outside the black community and the white community” by finding similarities between her life and the lives of others, “thus finding a community I call home” (Scales-Trent 1995:8). Thornton agrees, claiming that as a “mixed race individual, I had to create my own community and sense of identity” (Thornton 1996:116). Resonating with these writers, the women in my study also may be said to feel similarly. Some described their experience in terms of a series of transparencies, where the acetates overlapped to create their own space. For example, Katya and Julia met in film school. They wrote and directed a short documentary about “mixed race” people, entitling the film “The Power of C”, where A and B connected to create a new space. Katya explained this idea in greater detail during her interview with me:

I recognize that I occupy a space in both spheres. As well as something outside of that that is unique to people like me. This whole idea of, membership between communities as well as a third, distinct, separate community.

There is no sense in the above narrative that Katya feels “out of place”. Instead, Katya suggests that she occupies a home in several spheres, as well as a unique space to call her own. I will propose that this “third, distinct, separate community” is envisioned among some participants as a productive site of subversion, where binary oppositions are upturned, where marginality is seen as positive and the potential for forging new alliances is augmented.¹⁰

I want to end this section by returning to my interview with Marical. I have previously noted how Marical was excited by the “mixed race” identification. Much like my interview with Makeda, as indicated in my methodology chapter, my discussion with Marical took on a form of a dialogue which found us swapping ideas, and in particular, academic ideas around

¹⁰ In her investigation of sexual and gendered boundary crossings, Marjorie Garber refers to the state created by transvestite activity as “the third,” which represents, in her view, “a mode of articulation, a way of describing a space of possibility” (Garber 1992:15) which she reads as paradoxical. Garber goes on to say that “the third” challenges either/or thinking and is strategically situated to challenge cultural hegemony. I note some similarities between Garber’s conceptualization of “the third” and these womens’ narratives.

multiethnicity. At one point in the interview, when I was enthusiastically extolling the virtues of Homi Bhabha, Marical pensively leaned back in her chair and sighed:

Yeah, I'm not so up on that theory, so I can't really, I'm not really sure about that Homi Bhabha stuff. But the hybridity stuff is fabulous, I really like that. But you see, it's so interesting because we've got to make a distinction between a politicized hybridity or a politicized third space and a real, like, it's like fucking neoliberal third space, you know? Like cause I don't buy this shit, "oh we're all human beings". You know what I mean? I think it is very, very, very important to recognize racial dynamics or to recognize power dynamics in a society. And it does have to do with like race and gender and class and sexual orientation, that's so present. And I don't buy this idea where, "Oh, well, we're all members of the human race and we all should just get along". That is the stuff I think that was around in the 70s that fucked us up to begin with. There needs to [be a way to] go beyond our traditional definition of the space, I mean a race... space.

I find Marical's reading particularly appealing because of the ways she interacts with theory and her own personal life to make a statement about the ways in which multiethnic individuals have been seen through time. By asserting her desire for a new "race space," Marical insists that there has got to be a way to move beyond images of multiethnic individuals as solving the world's racial problems. These sorts of comments suggest that my informants are not dupes of the dominant discourse on multiethnic identity, notwithstanding that they have obviously been influenced by academic writings on "third spaces", and fluid and flexible identities. Nor are they postmodern champions of a cult which worships hybridity or spatial metaphors. Rather, I interpret their narratives to mean that there is a paradoxical space between these theoretical suppositions where these women live out their lives, cultivating fine judgements of when to use what discourse in particular situations. These narratives echo the theoretical ideas of Rose. Women in this study occupy various paradoxical spaces. These spaces are "lived, experienced and felt" (Rose 1993a:140-141), places of oscillation full of images of mobility and access (ibid:152). Marical allows for the possibility of a different kind of space through which difference is tolerated, rather than erased (ibid:155). Marical claims a space and a territory to call her own outside of the exclusions of the racialized hierarchy.

I suggest participants recognize the need for alliances in struggle - where "the space of separatism in these discussions, then, is also a space of interrelations - another paradox" (Rose 1993a:153). Identifying as multiethnic is read not as oppressive but rather as occupying a place

where difference is envisioned as a strength. To ground these ideas in the everyday, I will introduce narratives from Katya, Marical and Darius.

Katya specifically employed the metaphor of “interpreter”, “ambassador” or “translator” to describe how she feels about being multiethnic:

[I think I can look] at things from both sides. In acting like an ambassador. Which is something I recognized, I think, for many years, but didn't realize what it was that I was doing. And trying to explain one side to the other. I act as a translator. Interpreter. And I think that I do that, I feel that is one of my roles. Not necessarily something that I asked to take. But I felt some sort of duty that I did not want black people to be misunderstood. And I didn't want white people to be misunderstood. Or I didn't want black people to misunderstand white people. And [I am able] to move between, move across a spectrum, being able to be the ambassador, to present different sides, to represent the other in both circumstances. To come from an informed position on both sides. So a knowledge, a partnership. And I don't necessarily think that someone that was “here” or (points across) “here” would be able to give that much information.

I am particularly struck by Katya's implicit suggestion that she refuses to read her multiethnic status as a problem: instead, she sees it as part of a potential solution in dealing with conflict. I think the mixing of the metaphors here - interpreters, ambassadors and translators - is important. I am fascinated by the mobility between the use of these phrases. Katya explains that she can simultaneously act as an interpreter, translator and ambassador between groups. The sense of being an interpreter or translator seems more in tune with the process of being an ambassador, a role which has been traditionally read as that of a negotiator. Katya sees herself as being able to interact with many groups, fostering communication and understanding. Stuart Hall has made allusion to this tendency, stating that “the future role of mixed people may be that of negotiators. Since they belong to many groups, they will be seen as insiders, with vested interests in making plans work for all sides” (S. Hall 1992:328-329). Katya explores the construction of a different kind of space where women need not be victims (Rose 1993a:159). She locates a place that articulates a troubled relation to the hegemonic discourse (ibid:159) of the multiethnic individual. Instead, Katya deliberately emphasized that she practices crossing boundaries to increase communication across groups.

Marical echoed many of Katya's sentiments. When I asked her whether she feels that her "mixed race" identity has given her a certain kind of perspective on the way she looks at race, she responded:

Oh yeah, I think I'm a genius! (laughter) I think it's great, definitely. Just because I always feel like I'm a fly on the wall, I feel kind of like I've been privy to certain ideas and I seem to spend a lot of my life explaining things to black people to white people and white people to black people, just explaining. There's that, there's that book about psychotherapy, and women of colour. There's a section on mixed race women. Are you familiar with it? And they say that a lot of mixed race women are really driven, as individuals. Because they're driven by the idea that they're different, or they're special, somehow. And I have to say that that rings true. Is that I have, because I've always felt that I was different. And deciding not to hate myself forever! (laughter) I've decided that I'm special. And I think that gives you a lot of freedom. I don't feel like I have a lot of things that contain me. Because I've broken most of the rules already, just by existing. So I feel like I have unlimited potential, to a large degree? You know? And I think that that's a really good thing.

Much like Katya, Marical explained that can act as a translator across groups as a "fly on the wall" where she can play the role of observer. She demonstrates that at times, the multiethnic woman does experience alienation, clearly illustrated through the phrase "and in deciding not to hate myself forever". I do not want to dismiss the fact that at times, the multiethnic woman does in fact experience alienation as a result of society's rigid rules about racialization. However, alternate readings of the experience of marginalization is in turn suggested by Marical. She deliberately decides that she is "special" and although she recognizes that she is seen as different in many ways, she also feels she has unlimited potential, thus turning her marginality into a productive site.

Women in this study suggested that the manner of occupying a space at the threshold of the margin can provide a perspective from which to view the complexities of difference. It suggests that individuals at the margins may read their marginality as a positive, or even superior, stance from which to forge new alliances. Some participants even likened their multiethnic status to an ability to understand marginality. Thus, they expressed to me that they often occupy spaces both at the centre and the margins. For these women, senses of identity were not described as rootless or homeless. Instead, they referred to notions of movement, of moving

through categories, and developing scattered senses of belongings with a diverse range of collectives.

In the narrative below, Darius acknowledges feelings of marginalization associated with her own multiraciality. While she acknowledges that she occupies a traditionally defined marginalized stance, she diffuses dominant readings of marginalization associated solely with oppression and alienation, interpreting the "experience of being other" as a site of renewal:

I kinda like the experience of being other. I grew up with the experience of being other. And I didn't grow up with it as "You're other, you're different, therefore you're separate and you're..." I actually feel that my experience of other, even though it sometimes made me feel alone, sometimes made me feel, different, that it's really, really one of the biggest factors in what I see as my compassion in life? And that it, in a funny way, being other actually made me related to everybody, made me feel like I could relate to everyone in that they're other. Do you know what I mean? So, I kinda felt like I didn't feel separate from anybody. Even though I felt a sort of individuality, I always felt a kind of connection to everybody because I could always see, I could always feel an empathy for where they felt separate. Or for where they felt different. Or if they were the underdog, or if they were someone that was, if someone experienced prejudice from someone else, or if they were so, so ironically the feeling of being other made me feel like related. So I like that about my experience. I think that's a good part of my experience. Because you know ultimately I think that we're in this world to know that we're connected. To each other, and to ourselves. And so I like the fact that, I can be reminded sometimes that people can look for ways that they're related instead of where they're different all the time. There's so much of where we are different. There are so many boundaries, there are so many, borders drawn around where we are different from one another.

Darius celebrates, rather than laments, her experiences of marginal status. She writes herself into a site of belonging, rather than positioning herself outside of it. Darius insists upon redrawing the lines of separation among individuals by focusing upon sites of similarity and the potential of forging coalitions through difference. She believes that we are all decentred, minor or oppressed, in similar but not exactly the same, ways. The ways in which her positioning among others is mobile offers her potential to open up libratory possibilities of mobile paradoxical spaces. Darius reads her multiracial identity as offering her an unusual vantage points: a third eye, a potential for seeing both sides:

I find that people usually experience me to be whatever they are. OK that's a bit of an exaggeration. Like people who are like blonde haired and blue eyed, and from Sweden, they don't necessarily...but when I was living in L.A., I definitely would get I would blend in to people's experiences with Mexican, [and they would speak to me in Spanish]. When I was Thailand, a lot of the Thai people would say, "Are you Thai?" Even in Toronto, people will usually think that whatever they are, they will they will also think that I am. They'll see me, and see themselves in me somehow. I find people usually speak to me in their own language. I kinda like it! You know, in a fun kind of way, it gives me a chance to interact with people. Or maybe it's more that I like the fact that I believe in this world that there is too much emphasis placed on where we're different, and actually it would be a much better world if people would find out where we are similar? And I like the experience of people looking for where they are related to each other. Rather than looking for ways they are different. So even though I'm you know, if someone's speaking to me in Spanish, and then I have to say, "Well I'm not Spanish", and I don't speak Spanish, I kinda like that they're looking to MEET somewhere. You know?

Instead of expressing anger at being continually asked about her identity, Darius interprets the inquiry in a radically different fashion. Darius diverts the discourse on difference by focusing upon the potential for strategic sameness. She explains how she reads being asked the question "Where are you from?" as a conduit for potential coalitions between differences with others. In discussing how people perceive her to be what they are, Darius is illustrating how racial divisions themselves can be refigured.

I want to conclude this section by showing how some participants experienced a bond with others across racialized divides. In the example which follows, Darius seeks a form of identification with another. While identifying as "mixed race" is an important aspect of her identity, what matters more to her is not the unqualified fact of that descent, but rather the experience of a life as a member of a group of people who experience themselves as, and are held by others to be, a "mixed race" community:

I remember one time my father saying, that I'd be on the bus, or the subway, or we'd be out somewhere, and one time I was seven or eight years old, and seeing other kids that were mixed. And not that they were the same or similar mixes as me, or they looked the same as me, but just that they were mixed. And they would be the one I would be focused on, across the room, you know? And he would recognize that, and say, "Ahhh, you've found your people, huh?!" (laughter) So in that kinda joking way, he was expressing to me, and acknowledging the fact that in some way, even though I'm very

close to my family, in the experience of seeing myself reflected back, um, that I didn't have that experience of my family. I saw it more with strangers.

Darius connects across difference with a mere stranger based upon his phenotype, imagining a belonging between herself and another through their shared trait of difference, in her eyes. There is a difference accentuated between her and her father, while she imagines a special affinity with another because of their similar experience or way of life. She establishes a point of contact across a geography of division, creating a series of overlaps between herself and a stranger.

In the next narrative, Maribel summarizes some of her experiences as a student working in Boston during the summers. Maribel explains how, in her workplace, she can move through a variety of contexts seamlessly, not only crossing borders in a racialized context, but also in terms of socio-economic background, and personality. Her comments, like those of Darius, suggest that we need to contemplate forms of belonging which are forged across gender, race and class to include momentary configurations of choices such as personality and geography:

You can assume certain identities, in different places, and people won't be threatened by you, because everybody can identify with at least part of what you are. You know? And that's definitely an asset. And in a place like Cititask¹¹, where a lot of the work was highly politicized, I could sort of get in a group where the power structure was white, because they saw me as educated, and, could identify with my background, because I went to Stanford. But you know, I could also find out what was going on on the ground level, with people who were, you know, were much more mixed in terms of racial composition. Because, they felt that I belonged there. I would be welcomed. As a contributor. They saw me as part of that group. Right? I just find it really easy to slip in and out of different groups, there's just so many different ways to look at the ways in which people bond together. In terms of race, but also socio-economic background, and personality, and all of that.

Maribel is placing an emphasis upon how she feels individuals forge alliances with her, imagining that people identify with at least "part of who she is". Maribel explains here how, through her "Ivy League" background as a student from Stanford, she was allowed access to the upper echelon power structures, while at the same time, she could also participate at the

¹¹ I use a pseudonym here in substitute for the name of a non-governmental organization in Boston where Maribel worked during her college years.

grassroots level as someone who was identified and identified as a person of colour. Maribel bridges class and educational divides suggesting an ability to hold, merge, and respect multiple perspectives simultaneously.

Experiencing a constantly challenged identity, women in this study occupy mobile paradoxical spaces to make themselves at home in an interminable discussion between traditional ethnic inheritances and the diverse present. They express their ability to form allegiances across difference and often attribute this ability to their multiethnic heritage. Instead of lamenting feelings of grouplessness, of not fitting in and using phrases which imply negative connotations or anti-community feelings, these women insisted upon discussing the ways they occupy mobile paradoxical spaces, experiencing fluid interaction among various groups. I have deliberately employed many of the ideas emerging from the work of Rose (1993a) and Probyn (1996) in order to demonstrate the more complex alliances that multiethnic women in this study forge across racialized divides.

6.5 CONCLUSION

"I opened the window...wiggling my fingers beyond the glass...where the snowflakes caught on them, then disappeared. The snow looked tinted with blue, the way totally white things sometimes do. It's the same with things that are deeply black - an Asian girl's hair, a drop of ink, a stallion's coat. They turn blue" (from Danzy Senna's novel Caucasia)

I have begun to suggest some of the complex ways participants in this study inhabit mobile paradoxical spaces, both through their association to the label "mixed race" and with other individuals. The work of Rose and Probyn provide a useful framework to theoretically conceptualize the contradictory and mobile nature of participants' affiliation with the label "mixed race". Through the diverse contemplations of the "mixed race" label as a linguistic home for participants, I have attempted to illustrate the challenge of "us[ing] the sign and [at the same time] avow[ing] its temporal contingency" (Butler 1993b:312). I have shown how the term "mixed race" evidently means different things to different individuals at different times. The label can function as a series of multiple identifications which come into play in different situations. This interrogation of the label is my attempt to problematize, extend, disrupt and rework the term.

In this chapter, I have explored the ways in which informants contemplate the label of “mixed race” and pointed out its various pitfalls and possibilities. I have looked at the various alliances and allegiances multiethnic women forge in order to inhabit what I have called mobile paradoxical spaces. By thinking about how people get along and get by in a racialized world, I have suggested that relations of proximity between individuals can be more adequately theorized than presently envisioned. My last quote in this chapter is courtesy of Katya, who tells me how she sees herself:

It wasn't until people started asking me (she says in a sad voice): "Oh you poor thing, how are you dealing with being mixed? You must be so confused!" And I would say, "Oh really?!" (laughter) "What am I supposed to be confused about?" And then, they would say, "Oh you don't know who you are!" And I would say, "Oh sure I do. My name is Katya L'Engle Atwood!" (laughter) As I got older, when I thought about what it meant to be biracial, or mixed, I, had more articulate answers, like "No, I'm not confused. I recognize that I occupy a space in both spheres. As well as something outside of that, that is unique to people like me."

Katya subverts the socially constructed myth about multiethnic individuals being “out of place”. She articulates a self-conscious defiance against the limitations of the racialized language which imposes definitions upon herself as a subject. She explains how she has moved through the use of various identifications over time, in order to more clearly explicate to others the variety of ways she reads her identity.

Participants explored the necessity of considering multiethnic relations as co-constructed with other axes of domination and resistance, emphasizing that to be multiethnic means to be internally and externally differentiated through intersections with other unfolding relationships. The women of multiethnicity in this study are actively engaged in the process of developing new conceptions of belonging and identity which transcend old totalizing categories - in part because they share certain levels of cultural capital and shared understandings around the politicization of the label “mixed race.” They relayed to me the variety of relationships they forge through difference. Many women interviewed explained that in addition to having referent groups comprising multiple ethnic groups, they also maintain a healthy multiethnic identity through

membership with a group that identifies as “mixed race” - evident through Claudia’s work with the newsletter “Mixed Messages”, and Rhiannon’s discussion group, for example. I believe critical “mixed race” theory must be up to the task of rendering the social field vibrant by acknowledging these sorts of affiliations. As multiethnic researchers, many of us are continuing to struggle with these questions, clearly indicative at a recent “mixed race” conference where speakers voiced their concerns about critical “mixed race” theory reaching a standstill (Mahtani and Moreno 1998). In attempting to develop an “unnaturalized” (Kobayashi and Peake 1994) discourse in “mixed race” theory, I have tried to tease out a more mobile and paradoxical voice which emerges in the narratives. I use the term mobile paradoxical spaces to highlight the potential of local particularity and multiple identifications. The metaphor enables a reflection upon the ways individuals relate to spaces around them. It recognizes how transactions between individuals are “affected by the spaces that separates them.. allowing [us] to fashion and use space creatively” (Harvey 1973:24). There are, certainly, other ways to map out the diverse kinds of mobile paradoxical spaces among multiethnic individuals. I hope I have provided a preliminary sketch for future cartographies.

Finally, I have grounded the theoretical ideas of both Rose (1993a) and Probyn (1996) in the everyday by drawing from the metaphor of mobile paradoxical space to describe the experiences of multiethnic women in this study. The metaphor gets at the simultaneous occupation of several contradictory subject positions. By showing how these ideas play out through participants’ conflicted feelings regarding the label “mixed race”, I have tried to ground Probyn’s claim that there is no fixed identity nor final destination (Probyn 1996). The metaphor of mobile paradoxical space has provided a legend which acted as a guide through my travels of the rocky and multi-textured stories of participants and I have chosen this tack in order to disrupt the chasm between theoretical and empirical explorations.

In this chapter, I have focused upon the ways participants forge mobile paradoxical spaces to create alliances with others. In the next chapter, I will map out the carefully orchestrated strategies that informants employ in order to “do difference” through various innovative racialized performances, thus illustrating their agency in both creating, and destabilizing, racialized categories.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Tricking the Border Guards: Performing Race

7.1 INTRODUCTION

“Race is a complete illusion, make-believe. It’s a costume. We all wear one. That’s the absurdity of the whole race game” (from Danzy Senna’s novel Caucasia)

As I have demonstrated in chapter six, multiethnic women in this study exhibit a capacity to develop strategic sameness across racialized boundaries. In this chapter, I explore how the women enact various innovative performances to “do difference” - illustrating an ability to both disrupt, and sometimes even create, racialized divides simultaneously. I will do so by engaging with excerpts from my own research diary, the voices of participants, and the work of Judith Butler in order to develop a more nuanced model of performativity (Butler 1993a; Butler 1990). I read performances as “presentations, showings, and manifestations of daily life” (Goffman 1959; Thrift 1997) and will expand upon my definition further in this chapter. Performativity offers an effective means of uncovering the constructedness of the rigid rules of racialization. I hope to demonstrate the kinds of productive spaces that difference makes (Soja and Hooper 1993).

The experience of multiethnicity can offer a site for the performance of potentially enabling political identities. Multiethnic women in this study demonstrate a desire to create new meanings out of imposed racial orders and take advantage of multiple, dynamic and ambiguous spaces of politicized and racialized identities. Because some multiethnic women can alter how they are perceived racially, they can often manipulate the kinds of subjective feedback and experiences to which they are exposed (Root 1997). Some multiethnic women adopt identities which are, all at once, “strategic, tactical, mobile, multifaceted, blurred, awkward, and ambivalent” (Pile 1997:27). I hope to map out the situated practices through which multiethnic women in this study not only contest, but also produce and rework, the production of their own localities.

Firstly, I draw attention to Judith Butler’s notion of performativity. I will argue that Butler displays a particular racial blindness in her model as explored in Gender Trouble (1990) and

Bodies That Matter (1993a). I use her ideas as a point of departure towards exploring the parallels that can be drawn between the performative nature of *gendered* identities and *racialized* identities. It has been argued that a discussion of multiethnic identities allows for the application of the concept of performance, where not only gender but also racial roles can be viewed as performances in varied contexts (Zack 1997). Unfortunately, this theoretical supposition has yet to be grounded. I will show how some participants choose to perform “race trouble” through particular mobilizations of their multiethnic identities, often causing “subversive confusion” (Butler 1990:34). Secondly, I map out cartographies where racial performativity is imaginatively enacted, drawing on tales retold by my informants. Finally, I ask what these varied performances tell us about the ways multiethnic women in this study contemplate their selves. This chapter thus seeks answers to the following questions:

*What is “racialized performativity”?

*Are there ways of demonstrating through performance how race is socially constructed?

*What do these racialized performances tell us about participants’ envisioning of the self?

7.2 BUTLER'S NOTION OF PERFORMATIVITY

“We all skinwalk - change shapes, identities, from time to time, during the course of a day, during the course of our lives. I think about how we create these identities, how they are created for us, how they change, and how we reconcile these changes as we go along” (Scales-Trent 1995:127).

I turn first to a brief account of Butler’s notion of performativity. Performance is discussed with increasing interest among geographers (see McDowell 1996; Rose 1996a; Lewis and Pile 1996; Bell and Valentine 1995; Cream 1995, Crang 1994 for examples). These works have demonstrated how dichotomous social categories can be brought into question and sometimes even subverted through performances (Domosh 1997). Performativity, a concept which owes much to the seminal work of Erving Goffman (1959) begins to acknowledge the kinds of techniques and efforts enacted by participants who stage crucial contextual identities. Butler’s notion of performativity has played an important role in the development of my theoretical thinking in this chapter and I begin by briefly exploring the contribution that she has made to critical studies in gender.

Butler draws upon the work of linguistic philosopher J. L. Austin (1955) in discussing the process of subject formation. Butler's seminal book Gender Trouble (1990) is concerned with identifying the category of "woman" which is the subject of feminism, exploring de Beauvoir's maxim that one is not born a woman, but rather, becomes one (de Beauvoir 1973). In challenging the notion of biology as destiny, Butler allows for the possibility of radically transformed gender roles outside the mapping of discursive patriarchal power relations. Butler is predominantly concerned with the question of what produces the effect of a stable core of gender. Her answer is that, performatively, acts and gestures do this work. Butler asserts that gender is produced through performance. She further suggests that some kinds of performances can, in fact, destabilize gender. Thus, gender is read as a kind of cultural performance which results from the effect of an assortment of contested power relations. Relying upon a theory of the performative taken from speech act theory and involving ongoing actualization of gender meanings in the present, Butler argues against the fixity of gender identity. Performativity is not read as a single or even deliberate act, but rather "as the reiterative and citational practice by which discourse produces the effects that it names" (Butler 1993a:2). Gender is "performatively constituted" through:

"a stylized repetition of acts. The effect of gender is produced through the stylization of the body and, hence, must be understood as the mundane way in which bodily gestures, movements, and styles of various kinds constitute the illusion of an abiding gendered self" (Butler 1990:140).

Performativity for Butler describes the relationship between language and the creation of the lived realities we inhabit: that "reiterative power of discourse to produce the phenomena that it regulates and constrains" (Butler 1993a:2). Acts, gestures and enactments are seen as performative in the sense that:

"the essence or identity that they otherwise purport to express are fabrications manufactured and sustained through corporeal signs and other discursive means. That the gendered body is performative suggests that it has no...status apart from the various acts which constitute its reality" (Butler 1990:136)

By revealing how a parodic act like drag offers opportunities to destabilize and denaturalize gendered subject positions, Butler insists that we must come to grips with the fact that gender is merely an inscription of discursive imperatives, that is to say, an elaborate, socially constructed fabrication.

“If the inner truth of gender is a fabrication and if a true gender is a fantasy instituted and inscribed on the surface of bodies, then it seems that genders can be neither true nor false, but are only produced as the truth effects of a discourse of primary and stable identity...the body is not a ‘being’, but a variable boundary, a surface whose permeability is politically regulated, a signifying practice within a cultural field” (Butler 1990:126-139).

Gender is seen to be a signifying practice through which acts are to be understood as linguistic concepts, where gender subjectivities and identifications are produced discursively. Thus to recognize gender in this fashion is to read it in “the realm of cultural production” (Awkward 1995:190) and contestation.

“Because gender is not a fact, the various acts of gender create the idea of gender, and without those acts, there would be no gender at all. Gender, is thus, a construction that regularly conceals its genesis; the tacit collective agreement to perform, produce and sustain discrete and polar genders as cultural fictions is obscured by the credibility of those productions” (Butler 1990:140).

There are some key reasons why I was drawn to Butler’s theory of performativity. Firstly, Butler insists that gender is produced through performance. Secondly, she claims that gendered performances are repeated through a series of stylized acts. By making these claims, gender shifts from substantively foundational to socially temporal. I find Butler’s work remarkably refreshing as she reveals the very social constructedness of gender itself. The idea of gender as performative - an act, a style, a fabrication, involved in a dramatic construction of meaning, is a crucial element of her argument and challenges traditional sociological thinking. It is no wonder that many feminists and sociologists alike have derived much from her thinking (Hood-Williams and Harrison 1998).

One may well ask why I have chosen to explore Butler’s model of performativity over that of the

better known symbolic interactionist Erving Goffman.¹ I have done so for several reasons. Firstly, Butler draws heavily from Goffman as it is. However, notwithstanding certain echoes, Butler casts performativity less as a theatrical act than as a linguistic citation that draws its force from a larger regulative structure which bears down and produces the sediments of gender. Goffman's early projects carries a theatrical resonance of putting on a mask or playing roles: he writes of a front stage and back stage, of surfaces and depths. Butler insists that a recursive process produces the matter of bodies and that there is no body or subject position located outside of discourse that can anchor our libratory impulses. By adding the dimension of gender to performativity, Butler's work has been considered more sophisticated than that of Goffman (Hood-Williams and Harrison 1998).

7.3 CRITIQUING BUTLER'S MODEL OF PERFORMATIVITY

Butler's model of performativity is exciting but I must admit that I have some misgivings about her theory. Firstly, I find her work highly theoretical and there is often a disturbingly metaphysical quality to her writing. Furthermore, her model demonstrates a racial blindness. Race is remarkably absent from discussions of performativity in both Gender Trouble (1990) and Bodies That Matter (1993a).

¹ Although I have not focused upon the work of Goffman, his insights have illuminated some of the explorations of racialized performativity I narrate here. Thus, Goffman warrants some discussion. Goffman was one of the first symbolic interactionists to employ the dramaturgical metaphor by comparing everyday life to the theatre setting, insisting that people play a variety of roles, and foster particular impressions, while concealing others and staging their social encounters. Actors actively participate in the manipulation and manufacturing of their multiple "selves" (Goffman 1959). Goffman maintains that people fashion the situations in which they participate through the ways they conduct themselves and read the conduct of others. Thus, individuals have no stable or essential self. Rather, the self is envisioned as a "fleeting image" (Bell and Valentine 1995:147). Goffman insists that the self is continually created and recreated through interactions with others: "[The person] and his body merely provide the peg on which something of collaborative manufacture will be hung for a time...those before whom one plays one of his parts won't be the same individuals before whom he plays a different part in another setting" (Goffman 1959:252-3; 57). Goffman develops the notion of the "definition of the situation" where an individual "appears before others [and] his actions will influence the definition of the situation which they come to have" (Goffman 1959:17). Together, the actors involved in the particular encounter will contribute towards an overall definition of the situation. Goffman proposes that different participants in a social occasion perform quite different roles, but there is also the sense "in which multiple social realities can occur in the same place" (Goffman 1963:20). This, in turn, has a significant impact upon the readings of the space where the interaction takes place. Having said that, I feel that Goffman's model is in fact more spatial than Butler's, but remains stuck in dualisms that the dramaturgical metaphor implies (like front and backness). Goffman's analysis is rooted in institutional settings which provide clearly marked boundaries and scenes which are not always replicated through the social world (Keith 1988:42). For this, among other reasons, Butler's work is preferred in my empirical analysis which follows.

Taking the theoretical issue first, like Bordo, I am concerned that Butler's ideas are "ingenious and exciting, and it sounds right - in theory" (Bordo 1993:111). Her highly abstract argument hypnotizes readers with its dense and repetitive brilliance. However, beyond her discussion on drag, she provides little practical sense of what these new gendered configurations might look like in the lived world. I cannot help but think that one reason for this is because she chooses not to privilege space in her discussion of performativity. As Rose notes wryly, "Butler is just about the only major social theorist writing at the moment who has virtually nothing to say about space...[in] her linguistic definition of performance, the social becomes irrelevant to her argument (Rose 1995a:373). Butler seems reluctant to give concrete examples within the social. I want to bring energy to Butler's theoretical text by emphasizing the production of racialized meanings in the spatial. It is here that I turn to the dimension of race.

There is very little reference to race in Butler's argument. Her model of performativity has provided a much needed attempt to theorize and affirm the value of gay and lesbian experiences that have long been carried out in hidden and marginalized ways. But Butler does not move beyond gay and lesbian experiences to explore the interconnectedness of these identities with race. While investigating the dualisms inherent in heterosexual frames, Butler does not intervene in the binaries of race. What about framings outside the patriarchal grid? Many feminist theorists have insisted that race and gender are co-constructed, but Butler chooses not to investigate those interconnections. Finally, what are the implications of performativity for those who are doubly racially marked?

In this chapter, I will argue that much of Butler's argument can be developed and traced through the experiences of multiethnic women. In chapter five, I explored the kinds of varied performances that women in this study employ in order to move away from their perceived whiteness in society - performances such as changing their names or donning particular outfits for example. Butler's argument relies upon bodies that are obviously gendered but evidently raceless. I am curious about the practices among participants who deliberately employ actions in order to de-activate the racialized readings of the surfaces of their bodies. Taking my cue from Butler, I want to play with the notion of performance and demonstrate through narratives that racial categories, like gender categories, are "regulatory fictions" that can be produced

through varied performances, if we take performances to suggest “dramatic and contingent construction[s] of meaning” (Butler 1990:139).

7.4 RACIALIZED PERFORMATIVITY

Let me explain some of the reasons for drawing this comparison between Butler’s work and the stories of my informants. As I have shown in chapter two, racial productions, like gendered productions, are governed by culturally constructed, rather than biological imperatives.² Race, like gender, is a permanently contested concept and “terms of cultural engagement, whether antagonistic or affiliative, are produced performatively” (Bhabha 1994:2). This idea has not been neglected by researchers working in ethnic studies. di Leonardo, for example, has pointed out that culture and ethnicity can be something that individuals can possess or lose (di Leonardo 1984) and Back has explored how youth inhabit and vacate particular ethnic identities (Back 1996). Building upon their research, I will demonstrate a series of “parodic proliferations” (Butler 1990:138) enacted by my informants which can deprive racist culture of its powerful essence. I will show how race is actively performed and masqueraded among participants, rendering it indeterminate and unknown as categories are subtly displaced and inverted. By compiling the performative vocabularies of the women in my study where they deliberately toy with others’ interpretations of their ethnicity, I hope to uncover some of the complicated processes through which racialized identities are assigned. Unveiling the particular performances of my participants to reinvent impressions of their ethnicities provides a practical way of explaining how racial categories are regulatory fictions. What better way to take the science out of race, as Makeda demanded in chapter six, than by moving the “science of race out of the laboratory into the real world”? (Zack 1997:12)

So far, so good. But delve a little deeper and new problems crop up almost immediately. It becomes clear that Butler’s model cannot be relied upon completely to explore the complex affiliations forged among multiethnic women. Butler depends upon a concept of self-identity where there is no escape from a logic of exclusion, where abject bodies are continually produced

² However, it is imperative to note that race is not a cultural construction in the same way that gender is. For although both are predicated on real or manufactured biological differences, the former (race) is a “science fiction” while sex (of which gender is derivative) is not. For further analyses, see Stolcke (1993).

through the very grids of patriarchal discourse which regulate their actions. Thus, subversive actions are not really subversive: they are only actions skimming the surface, as the repressed depths of those identities can never be completely disrupted, often reinscribing the very trope they mean to contest.

This assumption may be challenged. In previous chapters, I have explained how the multiethnic woman has been positioned as being "out of place", and thus experiences inadmission to codes of race intelligibility.³ This model fosters a divide between bodies that matter and other abjected bodies developing yet another relentless dualism. I am concerned that Butler's emphasis on the discursive tends to obscure potentially promising explorations of subversion among identities that are seen as repressed. Any identity, according to Butler, is the system of a logic of power and language which generates identities as a function of binary oppositions (self/other), which seeks to conceal its own workings by making those identities appear natural.⁴

Butler is not alone here. Nearly all literatures on performativity, especially Goffmanesque ones, tend to focus upon questions of the dualism of self/other. In particular, they seem to be obsessed with questions about the authenticity of the self, and of the sincerity of the performance, often articulated through a vocabulary which contrasts depth and surface.⁵ Given these tendencies, I was initially reluctant to develop a model of racialized performativity among participants for fear of perpetuating the myth of the multiethnic woman as cunning or deceitful. The actor is often seen as a con-artist (Bell and Valentine 1995). Upon reflection, however, I recognized the critical importance of documenting the various arenas of the "cultural game" being played on the street where a sense of self becomes "not an essence, but a positioning" (Hall 1990:226). I

³Butler has recently clarified what she means by her notion of abjection, insisting that "abjection tries to signal what is left outside of those binary oppositions, such that those binaries are even possible" (Butler in Meijer and Prins 1998:284). I would flag that remark for potentially exciting explorations among multiethnic women who are positioned outside of the white/black dualism.

⁴To this end, I am indebted to the work of Allison Weir (1996) and her superb proposal of a positive relationship between identity and difference, where identity is not necessarily equated with repression and domination. By tracing the works of Chodorow (1989) Benjamin (1988) and Butler (1990) among others, Weir explores potentially rich affirmations of self-identity which are not severed from connections and solidarities.

⁵In Goffmanesque accounts, the issues become those of "frontness" and "backness" (Goffman 1959).

also feel that the theatre metaphor inherent in notions of performativity is somewhat misleading, because the set design in situations cannot be staged in advance. The very aspect of a variably shifting place makes that dimension chaotic, at best. These dynamics seem obscured in Butler's exploration of performativity.

I want to delineate the boundaries of my exploration of performativity here as I acknowledge that it remains limited in an empirical sense. My interest is more in terms of the expressivity of the performance, less upon performance as display than an articulation of a bodily practice⁶ which creates a self and space. The interview transcripts which follow provide examples among participants who choose to perform particular strategies in order to enact difference.

I present these narratives to ground the theoretical claims of de Lauretis who insists that "the concept of multiple, shifting, and often self-contradictory identity, an identity that one decides to reclaim from a history of multiple assimilations, [requires that] *one insists upon having a strategy*" (my emphasis, de Lauretis 1986:8). Based upon narratives, and my desire to demonstrate how race is socially constructed in different places, I will show how participants employ identity strategically. Their tactics of intervention demonstrate the notion of critical positionality. I highlight the theory of performativity to contextualize ethnicity; to make it less fixed and multiple; to emphasize its social production and reproduction, rather than focus upon contestations at a micro-scale.

⁶I am well aware of the burgeoning literature emerging in geography on the body. The body has experienced a discursive turn, where bodies became increasingly the productions of discourse and cultural practices. However, I fear that the body is becoming just another academic buzz word, and although I want to expand and enhance a field of possibilities for bodily life (Butler in Meijer and Prins 1998:277) I am more concerned with Probyn's concerns who asks not what is a body, but what a body can do (Probyn 1996). For some exciting explorations of the body in geography see Nast and Pile (forthcoming) and Longhurst (1997 and 1995).

A second concern is that Butler does not leave much room for the exploration of the individual's capacity to exploit particular situations in her model of performativity. According to Butler, all identity categories are expressions which are entrenched in language.⁷ In other words, any identity is the product of a system or logic of power/language which generates identities as functions of binary oppositions and seeks to conceal its own workings by making those identities appear natural. Butler's central argument, then, is that any identity is always a product of a logic of exclusion. This is a depressing line of argument. Butler paints a fairly dismal portrait where there is no escape from the logic of exclusion (Weir 1996). Her theory does not fully recognize the choices that participants make in a social world in regards to how they represent themselves. Thus, in this chapter, I reflect upon informants' own participation in the ongoing process of the constitution of subjectivity.⁸ However, this is not to suggest that they perform an "escape" from racist discourses nor have they successfully manipulated space outside of racialized representation. It would be naive and delusional, not to mention optimistic, to claim that these women are able to attain a complete freedom of creative racialized expression by virtue of their ability to contest and rework their identity. To be able to enact racial performativity does not mean that these women can effectively avoid racial essentialism.

Thus, while I interpret their creative and critical stances, the constraints and conventions of their circumstances cannot be overlooked. These women will be positioned as particular subjects by

⁷For example, Butler writes, "we are in some fundamental way constituted by language and in language, it produces the scene of our agency; it is what gives us the capacity to respond and to change things. If our language is being paralyzed or censored, then I also think our capacity for self-transformation is being paralyzed or censored" (Butler in Wallace 1998:16).

⁸In Butler's more recent work, she has clarified what she means by a genuinely "radical" act, insisting that "we are never fully determined by the categories that construct us" but yet at the same time, one can dissent from the norms of society by "occupying the very categories by which one is constituted and turning them in another direction or giving them a future they weren't supposed to have" (Butler in Wallace 1998:16).

their framers and as such, often experience limited flexibility to subvert those socially constructed framings of their identity. However, in this chapter, I trace the ways in which these varied racialized performances contaminate dominant racial norms by subverting the values associated with racial categories. Disrupting the process of categorization does not mean that they are subsequently abandoned. Rather, it shifts the focus from the categories as places of cultural value to the process of cultural classification itself. It reveals these categories as false in their essentialist claims. I hasten to add that these women are not actively veiling their ethnicities because they are embarrassed to affiliate themselves to what is most popularly seen to be a marginal group, although I would concur that this does indeed occur (see Root 1996). Instead, I suggest that multiethnic women divert and transform socially constructed representations of their racialized identities.

Throughout this thesis, I have been preoccupied with exploring the multifaceted choices participants make to contest the ways their racialized selves are read. Let me provide an example the kinds of recognition among participants who express an understanding of the different sorts of interactions they experience. Below, Katya explains how she chooses to perform certain racialized roles in different situations:

I have, you know, when necessary, when I need to, I [put on an] English accent. Which is again, white. And, kinda dominating in a way. And people do here tend to pay more attention to you if you can speak in a manner that is reminiscent of an educated white man. Right? So I'll slow my sentences down, I'll speak really articulately and I'll throw in a few complicated phrases. And big words. And people will shut up and listen. I do it on the phone too. I get a lot more respect. (laughter) So you know. If I'm ever mad with the bank. That's exactly what I do. And I recognize that I do that. And not everybody can do that because they haven't had the privileges that I've had in terms of being, I mean I spent nine years in university. I recognize that I have a lot of advantages over a lot of black people. In that sense. Over a lot of white people too.

Katya indicates how she participates in her own constitution through spontaneous acts in a constant attempt to make meanings of her own choosing. Katya even goes so far as to account for these processes by explaining how her nine years in university has influenced her ability to "act educated", further making the link that an educated persona is envisioned as both white and "English". Katya's narrative led me to ponder if there were ways theoretically to explore how

multiethnic women understand themselves, how others understand them, and how multiethnic women express that to others, not least of all to me as the academic researcher. Butler insists that the only kinds of subversion possible are available when the law turns against itself, and unexpected permutations emerge. I would argue that Katya would disagree with that reading. Katya's body is racialized in various ways, yet she still finds ways to liberate herself beyond readings of her culturally constructed body. Katya's narrative is rife with talk about interactions with others which includes her own motivations for performing racialized identities.

In considering Katya's episode, I was reminded of a particular moment in my own life where I deliberately enacted difference to denaturalize and resignify bodily categories:

It's midnight on Sunday evening, and I've been in the office all day screening tapes. The team I'm working with has finally finished the piece which airs tomorrow and I drag myself downstairs to catch a cab home. When I finally flag one down, I yawn loudly and climb in, grateful to sit down after being on my feet all day, absolutely exhausted. The cab driver takes one look at me in his rearview mirror and says brightly, "*Atcha*, you're Indian, aren't you?" He starts speaking quickly in Bengali. I sigh and shake my head tiredly. I've heard this one before, and know what's going to happen next. "No, I don't speak Bengali," I say. The taxi driver is shocked and raises his voice. "What? What kind of parents do you have, they don't teach you their native tongue? And what is a young girl like you doing out so late?" This is where I come back with a tight, "Well, actually, I'm part Scandinavian and Portuguese." He does a double-take, and apologizes, falling silent. I barely notice, as I'm half-asleep already. I sit back, kick off my heels, and dozily reflect over my day's work (Research diary March 15 1995)

I made a particular choice within a particular moment to enact a particular performance in order to divert further questions about my ethnicity. I live my own life out through a series of separations and connections and all the spaces in between. Individuals are embodied, speaking subjects embedded within particular discursive structures. And so, in this chapter, I want to focus on the diverse range of interactions narrated to me by informants regarding their racialized performative acts. I will argue that participants see themselves as being located within specific social and historical contexts, engaging in, dealing with, and moving through social meanings.

In furthering Butler's argument towards the development of my own ideas about racialized performativity, I do not presume that informants necessarily manipulate the presentation of their

outward racial selves, like something picked out of the closet.⁹ Instead, it is something that is viewed by and responded to contextually by their audiences and subsequently themselves. In fact, I suggest that racial performativity may have more to do with self-preservation than self-presentation, as I will show later in this chapter when I unveil some of the covert strategies employed by multiethnic women in this study.

I want to document some of these racialized performances. This, however, does not mean that there is an inevitable freedom and choice, like "some kind of multicultural cocktail party" (Jackson 1993:2) but rather a question of how to work the racialized trap that one is inevitably caught in. Before demonstrating the various racial performances enacted among participants, it is imperative to note that this fluidity is available to some more than others, as I will explain below.

Racial ambiguity

For some reason, this week has been spectacular in regards to the number of times I've been asked about my ethnicity. I've been approached more than usual and I can't figure out why - haven't got my hair cut or changed anything about my appearance drastically. On Monday, I was too busy storming down a flight of stairs at college to notice a young man running after me. He grabbed my arm eagerly and started speaking Italian. "No, no, I'm not Italian..." I stammered. On Wednesday, I was coming back from dinner at a friend's place in Tooting and I handed my travelcard to a woman who was about to purchase a ticket, knowing I wasn't going to need it for the rest of the night. She looked up at me, saying "thank you" in Spanish. I knew just enough Spanish to smile, and then went mute. When I didn't respond, she said, embarrassed, in fluent English, "Sorry, you just look so Spanish, you are Spanish, aren't you?" On Friday, I was wandering through Piccadilly Circus with some friends. I stopped to admire a sketching being done on the cobblestone sidewalks. The woman who was posing sat frozen and I smiled at her, saying, "Don't worry - the portrait of you is turning out great!" She relaxed for a moment, much to the chagrin of the artist, and gave me a big grin. Pretty soon, my friends and I

⁹Butler continues to fend off questions from others who read her model of performativity as single act theatrics, as a matter of expanding wardrobes and surface aesthetics. Butler insists that gender is not something that can be picked out of a closet each day. Rather, she tries to clarify what she means by explaining that "discourses actually live in bodies, they lodge in bodies, and bodies carry out discourses as part of their own lifeblood, demonstrating the constitutive character of discursive constructions" (Butler in Meijer and Prins 1998:278).

were chatting with her and her companion, both of whom were tourists from Gibraltar. After a few minutes of chit-chat, she looked at me, scrutinizing my features, and stuttered, "I hope you won't mind me asking you this, but are you French?" I don't really mind being asked, but sometimes it just feels relentless! (Research diary March 15 1998)

The notion of racial performativity which I develop hinges upon what I call "racial ambiguity", where the way a multiethnic individual's ethnicity is read alters the "definition of the situation" (Goffman 1959:17). Two aspects are crucial to the development of this idea. One is in terms of how informants are raced. The second explores the various choices that multiethnic individuals subsequently make after they are racialized. Both aspects deal with the interpretation of participants - both their own interpretations and others' interpretations as well.

Firstly, it must be acknowledged that the ability to perform particular racialized identities is often only available to some multiethnic individuals who experience ambivalence from others regarding their racialized place in society. As I have already discussed, the multiethnic woman has been positioned as being out of place, and thus it follows that her body is often outside those that "matter". However, it is imperative to note that it is the multiethnic woman's *individual presence in particular places* that renders her excluded. The same woman who is read as an outsider in one place may be read as an insider in another based upon others' readings of her phenotype. Although all individuals are raced in some form or fashion - "there are no unraced gendered persons, nor ungended raced persons" (Bradford and Sartwell 1997:191) - it became clear from my interviews that individuals had radically different experiences of racialization. I have narrated the above incident in order to show the varied ways in which I am raced on a daily basis. Although Katya identifies as a black woman, she demonstrates here how her racial identity is read in various ways:

So I've had an interesting experience in that I've been mistaken for coming from different parts of the world. And I think, what they assume, as related to their geographies and their experience, obviously. They try to categorize you, into something, so that they can define you within their own experience.

Katya's experience is not dissimilar from that of Darius in chapter six where "everyone thinks she is from everywhere". Even though Darius and Katya look dramatically different, both

women share similar experiences regarding people's perceptions of their phenotype. I do think that multiethnic women with light skin experience a greater fluidity in terms of their perceived racial ambiguity. However, the stories that follow range from those who are light-skinned and dark-skinned. Many informants experienced a wide array of racial labelling from others, even though some of them identified as black.

A second crucial postscript to the model of racial performativity is simply this. To declare that all multiethnic women actively disrupt and transgress racial lines is untrue. Many multiethnic women who do experience racial ambiguity choose not to identify as "mixed race" or pass as white, or consciously decide to veil their ethnicities permanently because of the racism expressed in their home or workplace, among a host of other reasons including the upper-middle class status of most participants. In order to craft a critical oppositional politics with precision, we ought to consider how selves in the plural are interpreted and how these readings may be disrupted and complicated.

The premature celebration of a coherent multiethnicity as implicated in new possibilities of a "radical creative race politics" echoes the very disturbing euphoria around cultural hybridity, an issue touched upon previously in chapter two. As I will dissect in greater detail, questions of context, author and audience become significant. Being multiethnic on its own is neither a political, nor a transgressive act. It is those actions that follow which set off, like a crazed pinball machine, the possibilities for performances. While some women may experience racial ambiguity, it is only through specific articulations around racial categories that racist dialogues and thoughts are effectively disrupted. In other words: if all multiethnic individuals were able effectively to unsettle racism through their mere presence on the landscape, then it follows that by virtue of the many centuries of miscegenation, racism should have disappeared years ago.

Racial performativity relies upon an understanding that informants often actively respond to the ways in which their racialized selves are perceived by others. I have previously explained how people glean supposed clues about a person's conduct through particular phenotypical traits which can form the foundation for racism. Many women in this study who experienced racial ambiguity explained how they felt hypervisible, constantly judged and evaluated, weighed down

by the pendular stresses of having to explain their ethnicity, over and over again.¹⁰ This experience is particularly heightened among multiethnic women, where “women are particularly vulnerable to society’s reactions to their ambiguous features. These reactions echo the overvaluations placed on women’s physical appearance...[which turns her into] an object or a curiosity (Root 1997:159). Because some multiethnic women blur socially constructed racial boundaries, they do not fit neatly into the observer’s schema of reality and this often results in stares and scrutiny, a sort of racial voyeurism. Even multiethnic researchers are not immune to this tendency, as Marin admits:

“[While] I discount any biologicistic fact of pure race and therefore racial difference...I [nevertheless] find myself staring - to a degree that I have to consciously control it - at all persons of mixed-race heritage.¹¹ In fact the way I determine that they are mixed-race is because I am staring, unable to stop looking until I can put ambiguity to rest, know what race is, call it something. And of course that’s the problem. If race rests on the concept that racial difference is absolute, then to be mixed-race is not really possible. So I keep staring..[knowing] that even as I look, I don’t see them” (Marin 1996:113)

Some participants were conscious of the gaze of others where they are continually being analyzed for clues to their racial backgrounds. Naela explains how she feels when she is being watched, reminiscent of “an aggressive plastic lens pushing on her” (Rose 1993a:143):

When I’m involved in political stuff, a seminar, or a march or a rally, like even International Women’s Day, I feel like, I’m not, it’s not me who’s watching everyone else? I feel like my eyes, reflect people’s eyes watching me? Not my own eyes watching people?

Naela describes the gaze which brings forth and accentuates a self-consciousness from being the object of the other. The situational context colours what she sees in herself, what she sees in others, and how she perceives others read her ethnic identity. She communicates a sense of being “otherized” and objectified, which makes her anxious. Naela is careful to point out that

¹⁰ I have previously explored in chapter four this encounter in relation to informants’ responses to the question, “Where are you from?”

¹¹ This theme laced through many interview transcripts. Not all women in this study were identified as “mixed race” by others, nor were they all considered attractive or “exotic”. For further explorations on this theme, see Streeter (1996).

she experiences this dis-ease when she is in certain sites: in this case, at political events, where her status as a "woman of colour" is scrutinized. Some political groups of colour have narrow criteria for group membership and thus many multiethnic individuals can experience feelings of exclusion because they don't look "coloured enough" (Root 1997:161).¹²

Makeda expressed similar feelings of being scrutinized for clues as to her racial place in society. Although Makeda is secure in her own sense of ethnic identity, she is aware of others' "slippery" perceptions of her racial background:

I think it's a little bit that feels off to people, that's what they can't place, that is what allows for that slipperiness to occur? They feel like, "Well, she LOOKS something, but what is it?" Right? And it's that kind of category crisis. But it's not my crisis. It's theirs, usually. And they're going, hmmm..." And that is when I think that people always try to second guess what a mixed race person is, perhaps more so, especially when their features, or their physical appearance is kinda in any way, slippery? You know? Or ill-defined or something? That people are anxious to define, I get that every day, or whatever. Any time I meet someone new.

By stating that "it's their crisis, not mine", Makeda insists that she knows who she is, while others are floundering in their attempt to classify her racially. Within that moment of the others' ambiguity, spaces are created which are ambivalent and fraught with tension. For some multiethnic women, particular places offer, due to their racially ambiguous appearance, sites where racial codes cannot be easily read.

Naela also hints at some of the shifting nature of space in how others interpret her racially, and in turn, how she decides how she will interpret others' readings of her racialized identity:

Like I said, it's always changing. I'm always getting certain reactions from people, and having to deal with different situations, sort of thing. Like work out in my head and the room and what the vibe is before I enter it.

¹² For an interrogation of how it has come to pass that many multiethnic women are unsure of whether they fit into the "woman of colour" category, see Mahtani (1994).

The only stability in others' interpretations of Naela's ethnicity is the precariousness of the situation. Naela never knows how others will read her ethnicity and as such, she is continually juggling these hidden matrices of behaviour. She reveals how her perceptions of herself through the eyes of others is "informed by conceptions of space that recognize place, position, location, and so on as created, as produced" (Bondi 1993:99).

The tension between racist discourses and resistance as they are enacted through the readings of participants' bodies in spaces are articulated in different ways in different places. I suggest that we "position ourselves in relation to others" (Rose 1993a:5) and thus participants demonstrated their ability to "size the room up" - and I am reminded by Naela's narrative here - which in turn, has an effect upon how multiethnic women define and redefine the possibilities of reworking the racialized self.

Choosing *what* performance *where*, depends upon a myriad of conditions, a complex exchange among a variety of actors where everyday interactions occur across racialized terrains. These exchanges are complex, in part, because places cannot be seen as "inert, fixed backdrops" (Moore 1997:87) where racialized meanings are inscribed, prescribed and consistent. The ground upon which strategies are performed are not permanent, fixed, nor stable. Rather, they ought to be envisaged as continually shifting and changing. Spaces of interrelations where strategies are employed cannot be compared to multicoloured splatters of paint upon a blank canvas. Everyday spaces are rife with diverse social dynamics, rife with power and subjectivity.

In other words, racial performativity is one avenue open to these women because of their racial ambiguity. Some participants explained that they have a wide range of racialized identificatory options as a result of the "slippery" nature of the race categorization game. This chapter centres around the ways hegemonic representations of race reverberate for women in this study and how they mobilize these moments of potential by creating sites for the performance of contestory "wish-images" (Kondo 1997:10) through the guise of various racialized identities. At times, participants assume an array of identities in ways which reflect, and expose racial categories' nonnaturalness and historical specificity.

In the next section, I suggest how some women of multiethnicity in this study command a plurality of invented ethnic identities that accommodate various situations, dependent upon their reading of their encounter, and their temperament at the time. I will document these modes of rich creative strategy deployment, where participants attempt to transform the constraining matrix-forces of category reduction into a mobile infinity of strategies.

7.5 MAPPING OUT RACIALIZED PERFORMATIVITY IN THE SOCIAL LANDSCAPE

"We are what we pretend to be, so we must be very careful who we pretend to be" (from Kurt Vonnegut's novel Cat's Cradle)

I want to begin this section with two stories of racial performativity. In the first quote, Naela explains how she puts into play a performance in order to create alliances among others. In the other example, Katya tells me how she deliberately dislodges particular stereotypes associated with her phenotype, thus illustrating her agency in "doing difference".

I have previously explored how Naela feels as if she is continually under scrutiny through others' perceptions of her racialized identity. In order to develop my argument, I will demonstrate that Naela does not just "take on" the gaze of others without appropriating a stance to counteract their readings. The gaze demands a response that enables her to reconstitute herself as someone in control of how she views herself and how others look at her:

Minelle: Did you ever find it easier to move within different ethnic circles because you were mixed?

Naela: Yeah. But I have to play different roles. Like I can't be exactly the same, within, like in Chinese circles, like I have friends, like a group of Chinese friends, and they are all East Asian. And I have a group of, I started playing on this basketball team for East Asian women? With Chinese women, it's called Lady Dragons, and so it's an all Chinese team. And first of all, there was a big thing about whether or not I could play. Because they weren't sure if the rules permitted it because I'm only half-Chinese. So it's OK, so I'm playing. So I went to the first practice, and I realized like, I consciously started trying to prove my Chineseness to them? And I make jokes a lot, about myself? It's the only time I do really feel in a group like I have to prove myself, is when I'm with Chinese friends who all speak Cantonese. And who are all very proud of being Chinese. And so, yeah, it's still fun but I sorta play like the joker role? Among the women, especially. I just notice, I realized, it's strange. I try to prove myself by like showing how well I can write

Chinese characters, and talking about Chinese food that others might not know about. Like it's really strange.

Naela relays an experience where she feels she has to prove her ethnicity. Tests of ethnic legitimacy can often be seen as power struggles, serving purposes of increasing fragmentation around ethnicity (Root 1996). In this situation, Naela enacts a performance in order to prove her ethnicity to others, especially the women by exaggerating caricatures of racial stereotypes. She masters a series of "repetitive stylized acts" (Butler 1990:140) around Chineseness which she hopes will be familiar to her Chinese peers while hoping to disrupt their readings of her perceived whiteness. Given the precarious nature of the situation, where her mere presence on the team was in fact debated, she feels she must prove her ethnic identifications to others.

Although Naela adopts particular forms of performativity in order to create and maintain alliances, Katya's performance is employed in order to subvert socially constructed ideas associated with racial categories. Here she explains how she deliberately moves away from stereotypes associated with the racialized categories of whiteness and blackness:

Katya: I expend a lot of energy trying not to be what people thought I was. And being able to bring more information into the situation than they expected, or, in some cases, desire.

Minelle: Can you give me some examples of that?

Katya: Well growing up. High school, university. I was very acutely aware that people would look at me, and say, "OK. A black woman, therefore she must be into reggae and funk. And she is a really good dancer. She's got rhythm, naturally!" Well the rhythm thing I couldn't hide! (laughter) I tried, but not for very long. I couldn't hide that. But I think that I was sparked, or spurred into appreciating, a music that was not particularly black music. And I did not delve into black music. I mean I was familiar with it. But I made some effort to, I was into punk and new wave, and all this kinda stuff. I mean this is what my friends were into. And sure, some of them were into reggae, and stuff like that. But I didn't know as much about reggae as they did. As some of my white friends.

Minelle: Was that a conscious decision on your part?

Katya: I'd say pretty close to conscious. I know I did certain things, I mean, if I just met you, and I got the impression that you would assume that I knew everything about funk and reggae, I would let you know that I had every Japan album that has ever been made, or I'm an AC-DC fan, which I'm not actually, but I'll just say that I'm a Led Zeppelin fan,

or Jimmy Hendrix, actually he's kind of crossover in a way, he's black but he plays white people's music. So, yeah. I would let them know that, or if people would, I guess it was a desire to be unique in a way. I would let them know that my mother's white. "You think I'm just a plain black person? Well, it's a little bit more than that. It's not what you think. You THINK this. But this is not what you're thinking." So it was my little way, a strange, convoluted, demented, way of telling people, "Don't assume. Don't be so ignorant as to assume."

Katya's decision to tell others about her music preferences reflects her desire to provide a local intervention which can shift racist discourses, disrupting a smooth reproduction of dominant imaginaries of race. Katya is pointing out the limitations of race as a defining concept about a person's identity. A preliminary reading of the narrative might suggest that Katya is identifying with other sorts of music to be seen as unique, articulating a politics of teen angst or dissent through the notion of refusing to conform, or that Katya may practice internal racism by self-consciously positioning herself outside of reified notions of blackness. However, I suggest that Katya's decision to define herself outside of socially constructed stereotypes illustrates a deliberate ploy which refuses to conform to reductionist or essentialist notions of race.

Katya employs a strategy of paradox, of serious play, debunking the constructedness of qualities associated with racial categories. In other words, Katya provides insight into the ways in which *public* identities are manifested, while attesting to the *private* choices she makes in asserting agency by negotiating the tension between the two. This space is eloquently articulated by Patricia Williams:

"The distance between the self, and the drama of one's stereotype..negotiating that distance is an ethical project of creating a livable space between the poles of other people's imagination and the nice calm centre of oneself where dignity resides. Creating and negotiating that space is the work of what I think of as the question at the centre of our resolution of racism...within that freedom [we may yet witness] the abandon of pre-judgement, the willingness to see another viewpoint and be converted if only for a moment, to allow oneself to be held in a state of suspended knowing" (Williams 1997:72-73).

Williams' quote resonates with my many of my own experiences, and those of some of my informants because it holds the potential for a transformative future space, where readings around racialization are no longer simply passive, nor solely political, but rather as productive

sites laden with paradox. Katya shifts the question from “how do *I* look (appear to you)” to “how do *you* look (see)”. She interrupts others’ impressions about her based upon her phenotype.

Katya adopts the role of the *new mestiza*¹³ by opening up the possibility to cross lines of demarcation, tearing down the barriers of oppositional binary structures through which she is often positioned as a static subject, and thus develops new and creative ways of understanding herself and others. Katya explains that she was frustrated when others were unable to see through the external appearances of a collective “racialized” identity to the internal reality of her own individualized identity. In refusing to collude with insidious colour biases and categories, she decides to contradict the stereotype.

In the rest of this chapter, I explore more strategies employed by some multiethnic women in this study who, like Katya, demonstrate ways of “doing difference”. Often, participants orchestrated arts of disguise, creating elaborate forms of “inhabiting and vacating” (Back 1996) racialized identities. There are many reasons for these choices, although their intent is not always clear. Generally, the creation of the disguise depends on a firm grasp of the codes of meaning which are being manipulated by the person exercising the disguise. There are times when these women will lie about their ethnicity in order to ward off questions about their racialized appearance. This strategy is employed in order to divert racist comments or to shock the person who has made the racist comment into silence. In illustrating varied moments of racialized performativity, I unveil tales where informants pretended to be of a different ethnicity, and adopted the role of “spies” or “tricksters”.

Pretending to be a different ethnicity

“Sometimes she’s part Chinese and part black...sometimes she’s part Ojibway, or else part Mayan, and one day she was even part Tibetan. She can be whatever she feels like, because who can tell?” (from Margaret Atwood’s novel The Robber Bride)

¹³ Gloria Anzaldua’s *new mestiza* provides a framework from which to deconstruct binary either-or identities and reconstruct a truly multiplicitous self. The *new mestiza* is one who: “copes by developing a tolerance for contradictions, a tolerance for ambiguity...learns to juggle cultures...[and] operates in a pluralistic mode” (Anzaldua 1989).

Although I am somewhat disturbed by the negative connotations these adjectives convey, women of multiethnicity in this study might be read as multicultural smugglers (Hicks 1996) where the multiethnic individual is "conscripted into a quiet revolution" (Root 1996:9) in the struggle against racialization. Two of the women I interviewed, Katya and Julia, were good friends in film school. They both told me how they concocted a particular social script in order to deal with annoying inquiries about their ethnic background. Katya explains how Julia and herself worked in tandem to stage their racialized performance:

Julia and I used to [switch ethnic identities] all the time. I'd say I was half-Chinese, and half German-Canadian. And she'd say she was half West-Indian and half Irish. And, people, you know, would go, "OH! Now, now that can't be right." You know? (laughter) And we'd just leave it there. Sometimes we would correct them, sometimes we wouldn't.

Katya and Julia joined forces in order to subvert socially constructed decisions made about their phenotypes in particular situations. Their decision to switch ethnicities was based on their desire to force others to consider the limits of racial categories.

In the narrative below, Darius explains how she camouflaged herself as Chinese in order to stun the racist. Her story shows the ways in which agency may be mobilized in unusual forms. Darius struggles here to regulate its sprawling energy through a daily experience of simply cycling down the street to buy groceries:

Recently, I was driving down the street on my bike, and somebody [in a car] cut me off and almost hit me, and I yelled out "Jerk!" And this guy in a truck drove up beside me and said, "Fuckin' Chinese drivers, eh?" (laughter) And this is one time where I did say, "I'm Chinese, you know." (laughter) So I pretended I was Chinese, because I wanted to see his reaction. And he was like (stutters): "Oh, um, well, ah, that's not what I meant!"

Darius could have easily agreed with him by nodding mutely, or simply ignoring his racist slur by jumping back on her bike and pedalling off without a second thought or glance back. However, within that split-second, she deliberately decided that she was not going to participate the rules of the racist "game" being played by the truck driver. Morales discusses the rules of the racist game as follows:

"You say something bad about black people; I say something bad about black people; we pat each other on the back and go our separate ways, affirmed and fulfilled" (Morales 1995:41).

The central strategy of authority is to force people to play its game, to make sure that the game is played by their rules. Darius refuses to play the game by the truck driver's rules: instead, she plays her own game and marks out her own rules. Darius' well-timed revelation, where she feigns to be of a different ethnicity, provides an example of what might be called a "race-bender" (Morales 1996:48), disrupting the potential for the truck driver to engage in uninterrupted racist speech. Darius has the opportunity to partake in what the racist driver assumes will be a shared sense of outrage. However, she deliberately detracts from that projected role, using the incident as a way to confuse the driver's socially constructed prism of a Chinese ethnicity and subsequently succeeds in reducing his level of comfort in this situation, indicated by Darius's reading of his reaction.

Darius appropriates the space in this encounter, employing her own devices to invoke "new political uses of the personal" (Bell and Valentine 1995:154) through a self-conscious and provocative shock tactic. Darius effectively shifts the balance of power "in the relations of culture...changing the dispositions and configurations of cultural power, [while] not getting out of it" (S.Hall 1992:24). The performative choices available to those who blur racialized categories are limited by the regulatory regimes of race which can curtail the range of performative possibilities. However, Darius attempts to mobilize the spaces within the oppressive racial grid by putting into action an ethnic performance where she creates an alternative vision to oppressive representations.

Like many participants, and certainly akin to my own experiences, Claudia has a low level for tolerance regarding other people's curiosity when it feels as if prejudice, rather than ignorance, guides their inquisitiveness. Claudia often pretends to be from everywhere when people hound her about her ethnicity. When she tells them the truth and they end up staring incredulously, "No, but you can't be...!" she baffles them by angrily barraging them with an entourage of identities:

[Being asked where are you from] could really piss me off and sometimes I would, when people weren't satisfied with me saying that I was of Scottish-Irish-English background and Japanese, I would just start listing off like thousands and thousands of different places, just because they were annoying me. Or sometimes I would just make things up because they wouldn't believe me. I would sometimes say something really elaborate, I'd tell them that I was an Eskimo or a native Canadian, or you know any of those things.

Frustrated by demands for self-classification, Claudia spiels off a wide array of ethnicities, and the decision to do so takes on varying importance in different times and places. The extent to which this "theatre of the absurd" is articulated reflects a refusal to comply with the arbitrary nature of racial classifications. Part of the pleasure in performing racialized identities is articulated in the act of bluffing, which is enacted in the "face of cultural configurations" (Butler 1990:138) that are regularly assumed to be "natural". Claudia deliberately performs an "unnatural discourse" (Kobayashi and Peake 1994) by taking the inquirer on a rat-run through the labyrinth of ethnic options (Waters 1990). Both Claudia and Darius attempt to displace rules of rigid racial categorization and accompanying ethnic stereotypes by taking on a flurry of identities that suggest an openness to resignification and recontextualization (Butler 1990:138).

These narratives hint at the living out of constraints, resistance and the subsequent emergence of racialized meanings through daily momentary encounters on the street. Even something as simple as your music preferences, a bike ride on a sunny day, or being introduced to someone at a party is laden with racialized meanings. These meanings and structures shift and reconfigure continually. The lengths to which participants will go to project ethnic selves for different audiences depends upon the shifting forms of racist ideologies and discourses in different spaces. Whereas Naela explained that she put into process a complex and lengthy series of particular acts in order to prove her ethnicity to the kids on the basketball team, Claudia's personal investment only involves reeling off a list of ethnicities, with the objective of halting further questions about her ethnicity.

The results of such choices among participants are not clear. They range from being indeterminate, contradictory and sometimes even revolutionary. For example, it would be highly presumptuous of me to assume that as a result of Darius's intervention, the truck driver was rendered silent and consequently contemplated his own complicit positioning with racism -

although Darius and I joked during the interview that we hoped that this was indeed the case! I suggest that these forms of struggle are by no means always coherent, nor progressive. In the next narrative, I hope to illustrate how one such incident could be read as a way to maintain control of a particular situation. Not all methods of performance can be seen as acts of resistance. I suggest that in the presence of the powerful, individuals are often obliged to adopt strategic stances (Scott 1990). There are several reasons for employing deliberate acts of coyness. Often, it signifies exhaustion with the inquiry, "Where are you from?" and offers a distraction from invasive or probing questions, as in Claudia's case. It can provide an opportunity to shock or surprise people who make racist comments, silencing them from further questioning, as Darius demonstrates. However, strategies of coyness can also be employed, a necessary tactic at times due to vulnerability to racist attacks often compounded by the variable of gender, which rarely permits the luxury of direct confrontation. There are times when participants actively or passively veil or conceal their ethnicity for safety's sake, where racial performativity is enacted primarily as a survival strategy. I want to illustrate some of these covert strategies by discussing how participants often presented anonymous stances in the face of oppressive situations, or adopted the role of the "spy" or "trickster" to define their movement in particular places.

Some participants explained how they adopted an anonymous stance in order to protect themselves from racist attacks, employing coyness by not saying anything about their ethnicity when it assumed for them by others. Clearly, there are times - and spaces - when it is advantageous to conceal your multiethnic background. I hope this example illustrates Probyn's claim that "living with contradictions does not necessarily enable one to speak of them, and in fact for concrete reasons, it may be dangerous to do so" (Probyn 1990:182). Maribel explains how she obscures her ethnic identities in order to sidestep a potentially threatening situation, offering her an opportunity to escape potential persecution:

I was in the subway [in New York City] stupidly at 2.00 am in the morning with my friend Julie. And this guy was really harassing Julie about her ethnicity. She's black. To me, she's obviously black. But she's dyed her hair. Actually what he first said was, "You're black, aren't you?" And Julie said, "No" because she didn't want this guy to...well, it was just weird. And finally she said, "Yes, I'm black." And he said, "GOOD!" And then he flashes this gun. On the side of his hip. (chuckle) And he goes, "Because us

black people", and he looks at me, "and us Puerto Ricans, we gotta stick together." So I was thinking, "I'll happily be Puerto Rican for you today!" (laughter) No problem!

While Maribel's omission to pipe up: "Well, no, actually, I am mixed" reflects her tentativeness to identify herself as "mixed race" in this particular arena (earlier in the interview, she insisted that she defines herself as "mixed race" in most social spheres), any open resistance in this situation might have resulted in instant retaliation. She explains how the situation was fraught with tension, where any misspoken word could have meant disastrous consequences. Resistant political subjectivities are constituted through positions in relation to authority which can often leave people in awkward, contradictory and dangerous places. "There are contexts in which downplaying one's assigned racial or sex identity might be a good thing to do and contexts in which playing it up may be good" (Shrage 1997:188). Clearly, racism has an uncanny ability to adopt new stances in different times and places.

There are times when participants employ particular fugitive and covert strategies in order to move through spaces which might not be accessible to them if they proclaimed their ethnic allegiances aloud. They are often offered entree to particular spaces which are traditionally prohibited by virtue of their phenotype and are thus able to transgress certain racialized boundaries. In the following narrative for example, Julia explains how both Katya and herself identify as "spies", subverting and revitalizing inversions of official discourses:

We were talking about how we would both make great spies cause we don't look like we're people in the context that we're in when we're transplanted into that culture...there's been instances where people have said things where I think they just don't realize what they're saying and I will correct them on it. And then they always do a double take and they look at me closer. I think if I had an affinity for languages I would make a perfect spy because I can transcend those borders. I would be able to enter all those communities without them realizing that I'm nowhere near where those communities are.

By "passing" as white, or normal in this sense, in everyday life, Julia suggests that she has the potential to shake the foundations of naturalized racial categories. At times, she chooses to uncloak her ethnicity in order to shock people out of their stereotypes. Julia expresses a desire to destabilize racialized spaces, where the link between racialized meanings and identities is unsettled and the slipperiness of naturalized racial categories can be revealed.

Envisioning oneself as a spy was a common thread throughout many narratives. At the end of our interview, Naela abruptly stopped me and told me there was something she forgot to talk about. Unprompted by a question, she began:

Oh actually there's one more thing I wanted to say, and it's not exactly about people questioning my race, [it's more about me feeling] like a spy? There's this one memory I have, basically in grade seven, the first dance I was at, at school. And I was talking to two girls, and they were talking about which boys they wanted to dance with. And these are girls that I had just met, like I had just got to that junior high school. And they were discussing, they were both discussing. And then they said, "Well what are you going to do if Chinese boy asks you?" And they were like, "I don't want to dance if a Chinese boy asks me, they're too short." And they said this like, like, I mean, I was so shocked that they were saying this in front of me? Like because I can't believe that they're saying this, they, then I realized that they didn't realize that I was Chinese as well? They were saying such offensive things, right when I was RIGHT THERE. There were the three of us. And that was a big shocker. And I just said to her, I just said, "I'm half Chinese. Why don't you want to dance with a Chinese boy?" I mean, they were just talking about Chinese people with such disdain! You know? And then I sorta realized, and we just changed the subject, or whatever. But that was just like, first I thought they were doing it just to get me going. To get me, to get some sort of response from me. To isolate me, to show me that they didn't like me. But then I realized that they didn't even know? And then I just felt, like I felt like I was, like that part of me was invisible? Sort of? And that I had all these powers, so I made up this fantasy in my mind, like of being to infiltrate all these racist groups, of people, and then go, "HA!" or whatever.

There are several tangled threads in the above narrative which I wish to tease out, some of which are reminiscent of my earlier comments about whiteness in chapter five. Firstly, a preliminary reading indicates that Naela initially read the girls' decision to speak disparagingly about the Chinese boys as a slight against Naela herself, indicated by Naela's statement, "I thought they were doing it just to...isolate me, to show me that they didn't like me." She is surprised to discover that the girls had not associated her as being Chinese at all. When she discovers this, Naela chooses to expose the girls' racist practices. With me, she expresses glee and amusement about her potential to undermine ethnic stereotypes in the future, where she acknowledges the destabilizing potential to infiltrate racist spaces.

In some ways, I caught glimpses of similarity between these two narratives and the management of lesbian identities in everyday spaces as discussed by Bell and Valentine (1995) where in

different environments, gay women may adopt a short-term or strategic approach by “waiting to see how the land lies before ‘coming out’” (Bell and Valentine 1995:148). Naela and Julia both focus upon the process of “coming out”, albeit in a drastically different way than is explored in Bell and Valentine’s account, by “playing the race card”. This is envisaged as a strategy of resistance in order to attack and expose racism. Naela chose in this particular situation to declare her ethnicity to those around her who made the racial remark. She indicates to me that she looks forward to a time when such an encounter would become a source of discomfort and momentarily a crisis of racial meaning where she could pose a threat to boundaries and hierarchies by creating cultural anxiety.

By no means am I suggesting that the moment at the dance was not fraught with feelings of exclusion or unhappiness. However, in her telling of the story to me, Naela chooses to focus upon the post-productive readings of the incident. This was not an uncommon tendency among the women I interviewed. There was a tacit thread weaving through most narratives where participants chose to emphasize the positive aspects of their multiethnic identities.¹⁴ Undoubtedly, my own bias as a multiethnic woman might mean I privileged these stories in order to challenge socially constructed myths about multiethnic individuals. However, upon

¹⁴ However, it is crucial to note that was not always the case. Chantal, for example, revealed some painful memories related to her experience of multiethnicity and said that she felt pity whenever she saw a black baby in a stroller being pushed by a white woman. As we were packing up after the interview, Chantal noted grimly that her insights might disrupt readings of the experience of multiethnicity that I had already garnered from previous responses - and that I might want “to drop” this particular interview from my case study. I feel this comment should not be overlooked. Chantal is pointing out to me the very real paradox of multiethnicity, emphasizing that not all multiethnic people share similar experiences of either absolute oppression nor complete freedom. Instead, she stressed how appearance is a strong factor in the equation of these dimensions. In many ways, her account of the experience of multiethnicity, as well as her erudite and sharp critique, were to have a significant impact upon the ways in which I have read narratives and I have attempted to explore these disruptions in chapter six: “I’m a blonde-haired, blue-eyed black girl: mapping mobile paradoxical spaces”.

reflection, I believe these particular anecdotes were revealed to counter particular socially constructed impressions of multiethnic women as either marginal or "out of place".

In the following narrative, Julia introduced the notion of the trickster as a way to describe herself in the midst of a discussion about her latest film project which follows the story of an animal trickster in Northern Ontario. The notion of the "trickster" has been subject to heightened scrutiny in cultural studies (Landay 1998;¹⁵ Gates 1995; Haraway 1995; Scott 1995; Young 1995) and literature (Beer 1998). Indeed, appearing on the academic horizon is now something called "trickster studies" (Landay 1998: 27). Geographers have also alluded to the trickster in relation to the development of an "un-naturalized discourse" where "practices that would in the past [have]...been designated as...witchcraft or voodoo...[might] be seen as a means of bringing about social change" (Kobayashi and Peake 1994:238). However, while academics have paid particular attention to the term, it is not employed widely in the vernacular. Hence, I was astonished to hear one of my participants liken her identity to that of a trickster, as it is not an everyday phrase. While describing the film to me, Julia abruptly stopped and said,

Julia: I love being a trickster.

Minelle: A what?

Julia: A trickster. I really like the whole notion of the trickster pretending. In the traditional trickster fashion, the trickster always being someone who's defined by difference... And I see myself as a trickster. So what I'm doing right now is masquerading as white but that's just so I can get off the ground... I'm putting on the guise of a white human whenever I want. So that I can push my own ends and help save the animal community which is the people who aren't in the privileged group. And I think I see that as what my role is. Turning things up a little upside down, changing people's expectations, surprising them. I think being mixed heritage works to my benefit in that I find myself in situations like this where I can protect the interests of Asian people in situations where people are not anticipating me to be Asian.

¹⁵For a detailed exploration of the female trickster in popular American culture, see Landay (1998) where her focus on the recurring figure of the female trickster in the developing mass consumer market serves as a way of adding gender to current discussions about consumption.

Julia reveals the destabilizing potential of the managed self and acknowledges her capacity to infiltrate racist spaces unnoticed, without the blink of an eye. By operating through spaces where she is read as white, while at the same time being the other against whiteness, Julia readily admits that she can “masquerade” as white which allows her the opportunity to enjoy the privileges that attend white skin. At the same time, however, Julia insists that she has the ability to challenge how spaces and identities are constructed and encoded by occupying both spaces simultaneously and sees herself as being able to perform acts of resistance in a veiled fashion.

By deeming herself a trickster, Julia is producing “a skill ceaselessly recreating opacities and ambiguities - spaces of darkness and trickery - in the universe of technocratic transparency, a skill that disappears into them and reappears again, taking no responsibility for the administration of a totality” (my emphasis, de Certeau 1985:18). Julia acknowledges her privilege by being able to masquerade as a “white person” and doubles that privilege by demonstrating how she can move in and out of particular spaces to “speak up” for marginalized groups.

A brief literature review of the phrase trickster gleans some interesting results. The trickster metaphor is often explored as an ambiguous and equivocal mediator of contradiction and I suggest that the use of the trickster metaphor tells a story about racial hierarchies. The trickster earns his success not by physical prowess or strength, but instead by his wit and cunning. He snakes through treacherous spaces where enemies reside, seeking to defeat him, and yet, in principle, he is unable to win any direct confrontation as he is smaller and weaker than his antagonists. Only by knowing the habits of his enemies does the trickster manage to escape their clutches and subsequently win victories (Scott 1990). The motif of the trickster has been considered a comic trope, a creative production, and an imaginative liberation in comic narratives: “the trickster is postmodern” (Vizenor 1989:9). Ifekwunigwe (1997) uses the term *metis(se)* as the term to describe individuals who have “British or European mothers and continental African or African Caribbean fathers”(Ifekwunigwe 1997:147) and I juxtapose that against the definition of “metis” defined by the ancient Greeks:

“[Metis means to combine] flair, wisdom, forethought, subtlety of mind, deception, resourcefulness, vigilance, opportunism, various skills and experience acquired over the years. It is applied to situations which are transient, shifting, disconcerting, and ambiguous, situations which do not lend themselves to precise measurement, exact calculation, or rigorous logic” (Detienne and Vernant 1978:3-4).

Clearly this is the case for Julia, who reads her own multiethnicity as a way of employing these specific strategies in order to achieve her own ends. Instead of being sighted and re-sited, an experience which is constantly being reassigned and reinterpreted on various terrains when you are multiethnic, Julia asserts her ability to site her audience - to manipulate those who have so often manipulated and positioned her own identity.

Gender is a previously neglected yet important aspect of trickster studies (Landay 1998:27) where female tricksters can “articulate the paradox of femininity and autonomy...by transgressing the cultural delimiters of ‘women’s sphere’...female tricksters violate [gendered] boundaries” (Landay 1998:26). In the genre of the “passing” novel, “mixed race” women are often characterized by what is deemed the “trickster” tactic of deception and boundary crossing. On the whole, these experiences of being a trickster tend to be tragic ones (Landay 1998:19). However, Julia’s narrative tells a different story as she clearly draws strength from imagining herself as a trickster. Ideas around female trickery in particular can underscore “issues of women’s exercise in covert power” (Landay 1998:29) challenging ideals of femininity against which female trickster rebel. It might be said that participants are “double tricksters” where they regularly contest both gendered and racialized representations.

To summarize, I have endeavoured to unveil some stories told to me by participants when they actively masqueraded or performed a variety of ethnicities. At times, these strategies disrupted the rules of rigid racial categorization, unsettling accompanying ethnic stereotypes. Participants described several series of momentary configuration of attitudes and choices, formed during interactions with others and encapsulating a multiplicity of shifting definitions and interpretations. The interaction between these multiple affiliations is complex. It represents an engagement with invention and play in a continual process of “becoming”. By citing these stories, I have attempted to unfold a series of maps, where participants drew new cartographies

of identity, effectively describing a politics of location that challenges traditional race readings by fragmenting and reconstituting the elements that make up racial categories.

7.6 CONCLUSION

“The madness of possibilities. But is there a method in all of this movement?” (Probyn 1996:61)

My broad purpose in this chapter has been to demonstrate how we might more fully read, interpret and understand the various racialized performances employed among some multiethnic women. I have tried to set into motion a critical process that explores the conditions of possibility for separate invocations of multiethnic identity. These women keep moving and “speak the sel[f] in ways that ...encourage other movements, that...recreate alternative positions” (Probyn 1993:172). I wonder, however, as I close this final empirical chapter, if in fact there is a method in all of this movement. I am curious about what all these racialized performances say about conceptions of race, ethnicity, resistance, the research process, and the self. I will engage with each of these in turn.

My initial point of departure began with Judith Butler’s assertion that gender is a regulatory fiction (Butler 1990) and in juxtaposing that through my own work, I further asserted that race is also a regulatory fiction. This phrase resonates with me because of its paradoxical nature. On one hand, race is utterly fictional, a story, an untruth, where fiction is sometimes associated with limitless boundaries. But the very real limits of racial performativity are unveiled by the term regulatory, where performances take place in constrained places, the vigilant border guards constantly on patrol. Such roles rely upon how they have been rendered as particular subjects within the oppressive framework of racialized meanings. There is nothing inevitable, nor natural, about the ways in which participants in this study are raced.

I have suggested that some women rework ethnic identities and disrupt social values associated with the seeing of race. More specifically, I think that particular meanings associated with racial representations are challenged and contested by some of these performances. Ethnic performances can trouble racialized lines, where participants “wittingly creating emotional and psychic earthquakes with emotional reverberations” (Root 1996:9). Participants challenged the

notion of naturalized categories and singular and stable identities by contesting the idea - "that's where you're from, that's why [you're] like that, that explains it, etc." (Probyn 1996:95), creating other possibilities, providing glimpses of multidimensional subject positions. "Lodged in the terrain of the social, they rearticulate a geography of possibility" (Probyn 1993:172) by playing with racialized impressions of themselves, demonstrating the very fabrication of race as a "fantasy instituted and inscribed on the surface of bodies" (Butler 1990:136). I have tried to demonstrate how participants actively redraw their own racialized constitution and drain racial categories of their powerful essences. I feel that the doing of race differently holds the potential for developing a project that unearths racial performances as "sites of critical agency" (Butler 1993a:x).

I have attempted to underpin some of the ways in which participants actively perform particular ethnic roles in certain sites and contexts. I want to consider the vital importance of agency and place in any understanding of how ethnicity is constructed, understood, and performed in particular arenas. I have previously explored the ways geographers have mapped out ethnic groups and processes within specific areas (Peach 1975) which reveal a lack of comprehension regarding the various ethnic allegiances an individual might develop over the course of a lifetime and through various places. Indeed, it has been argued that while "arguments [that discuss] sexuality are no longer produced through repression...ethnicity is still produced in that way" (Discipline and Place Collective 1997:516), where there remains a focus upon the containment of the ethnic population.

Although it might well seem that "the limits of what we are and what we can be may have been already mapped out by somebody else" (Rose 1993a:147) I suggest that participants rewrite themselves into the picture, where they are the authors of [their] own ethnicity (see Ignatieff 1997). Participants challenge and interpret ethnicity differently within particular socio-spatial contexts. The descriptive sociology participants engage in on the ground is powerfully freighted with the notion that ethnicity can betray traditionally defined senses of origin. For participants, ethnicity is more than something that is passed on through tradition, linked solely to birth and biology. These narratives tell another tale.

Some of the women in this study explored a variety of ethnic ties which at times were the same as their parents, and yet at other times, were completely different. I suggest that appearance only plays one of many roles in potential ethnic identifications and does not preclude other potential possibilities. Although I have not cited these narratives here, I spent some time listening to participants' enthusiastic explorations into a variety of ethnic options. For example, Madeleine had recently been to Japan, and explained to me that she felt a closer affinity to Japanese culture than to either one of her more traditionally defined ethnicities. It is also equally important to note that parents do not necessarily exert the only influence upon the ethnic identification choices of their children, as my interview with Farideh attests. Farideh stressed her own allegiance to Judaism which became the focus of our interview as she explained how she held *Seders* and celebrated various holidays and events associated with Judaism, a religious affiliation which emerged over time and did not reflect her own parents' religious beliefs. I suggest that these women provide a way to rethink traditional definitions of ethnicity. By pursuing several ethnic options, participants produce new cartographies of varied ethnic allegiances.

In citing these narratives, I have deliberately avoided a discussion of the politics of resistance currently en vogue in cultural geography (see Pile and Keith 1997). My reasons for this are simple. There is no way of knowing whether or not these strategies are enacted - or read as - strategies of resistance. I am left asking: while participants' performances can manifest conceptual slippage between notions of the natural and the socially constructed, are they, in fact, consistently indicative of participants' desire to make particular political or progressive statements?

In order to respond to these claims, I draw from my interview with Naela. When I asked Naela why she chose to enact various performances, she responded with a laugh as follows:

I try all different sorts of ethnicities... I'll just tell people I'm certain things, just to see what they say... I can't remember an illustration, but sometimes, they'll be like, "Oh let me guess, you're Philipino, right?" And I'll go "yeah" and but then I'll tell them the truth, I kinda make fun of them to their face. Which is fun.. sometimes I like to make up whatever, just for the hell of it, or because I'm bored! (laughter)

Naela explains that she has a whole lot of reasons, ranging from boredom, to anger, for employing racial performativity. She plays with others perceptions to suit her own mood among a myriad of other factors. As Shotter maintains, "there are many... human activities in which - though we may loathe to admit it - we all remain deeply ignorant as to what we are doing, or why we are doing it" (Shotter 1993:47).

Secondly, I think it is misleading to describe an act of resistance as an encounter between the powerful and the weak. This notion locks resistance into a binary characterization which is hardly productive. A return to the experience of Darius with the truck driver may offer insight. Did Darius occupy a solely marginalized position? Or did she adopt an oppressive stance by putting the truck driver ill at ease? Who was the "powerful one" in this situation? Interventions made on one level can be compromised by reinscriptions of power at another (Kondo 1997). It may be more helpful to ask how various positionalities highlight the necessity of carefully attending to what kinds of power relations are being understood and explored among participants during encounters in particular sites.

Finally, some of the examples cited here actually reinvest racist ideals by reidealizing them and reconsolidating their hegemonic status - far from what anti-racist practitioners would see as a progressive move. Performances can in fact reinforce a binary and oppositional mode of racial identification. Some seemingly subversive actions enacted by informants can be constituted out of, and actively maintain, racialized boundaries and indeed, the term "subversion" itself can imply that transcendent liberation from power relations is always possible. As Kondo indicates, "some degree of complicity with the dominant is inevitable" (Kondo 1997:13).

The intentions and meanings of strategies are clearly not straightforward. The consequences of negotiating various racialized positions are not open to simple or transparent readings. Participants acknowledged that they are not able to alter systematic racism through racial performativity, but what is at stake is the hope that their interventions, in some small way, will sometimes generate subversions that do matter. The articulation of an "un-natural discourse" (Kobayashi and Peake 1994) may generate unpredictable dissonances. But we can never be completely certain that this will be the inevitable result. The effects of these strategies are incalculable. The narratives provide a unique lens through which to view the possibilities not

for pristine resistance or opposition, as if such a thing were possible. Rather, they open up the possibilities for a power-sensitive analysis that examines the construction of complex and shifting selves in the plural, in all their cultural and situational specificity.

I have explored examples of racial performativity because I feel it is worthwhile to examine how many participants actively recombine conventionally racialized elements into new and often unexpected syntheses that disrupt racial binaries. Many of these strategies shake things up a little, unveiling new possibilities of identity configuration. Participants sometimes radically recontextualize stereotypes in ways that reconstitutes a rethinking of racial categories. I will go so far to say that I think these strategies are employed as a way of getting on and getting by in a racialized world. My concern lies more with the moment of the performance which “like a landscape, is only a small part of a mysterious narrative” (Michaels 1996:107). I am interested in the various personas these women cloak themselves, where we may be able to locate:

“the significance of the masquerade not with the masquerader’s intentions, but with their relation to their audience, which is to say the discursive context of the performance of masquerade...the question of the politics of the masquerade might then become, how does the audience interpret the performance: *who are you?* And the answer *how about you?* This performative context is crucial in thinking about the subversive possibilities”(Rose 1996:73).

These performances reflect an acute understanding of the audience where the performance is staged. How their specific audience reads the performance of the self is gauged before the participant stages the performance. The way that this awareness is mediated is particular to the place of the performance, where the “coherency of the self is opened up and its movement into theory creates the possibility of other positions” (Probyn 1993:2).

I was curious as to why some women chose to narrate these particular examples of racialized performativity to me as a researcher. At times, these stories were told to me after the interview was over. Although multiethnic women have often been read as a marginal group (Root 1996) I have attempted to demonstrate that during the interviews, participants challenged any fixed reading of themselves as marginal, often accompanied by anger and indignation. They refuse rehearsed social scripts, defying racialized interpretation of their selves based upon stereotypes

of the “mixed race woman” who is apparently “unable to deal with their biculturality...[and is subsequently] torn and confused” (Nakashima 1992:171). However, the interview itself might also be envisioned as a site of performance. It is possible that participants might have projected a “positive” identity throughout the interview process in order to contest the systematic dominant representations of themselves as weak or in positions of relative powerlessness, which successfully distill both categories into very fixed places of power. By telling me these stories, knowing full well I was planning on getting the story “out there”, participants effectively confuse the lines between resistance and power, further challenging the socially constructed myths about multiethnic individuals.

Finally, I am curious about what these examples of racial performativity tell us about the self¹⁶. As I have mentioned earlier in the chapter, there is always the concern that in discussions of performativity, the “real” self is disguised by several masks in the performance of various others (see Radhakrishnan 1996). In the interviews, these issues were not necessarily articulated through a vocabulary which contrasts the dualism of depth and surface.¹⁷ Rather, informants’ transcripts suggest that they participate actively in their own constitution, where performances constitute “the very subject it is said to express” (Butler 1990:24), through particular spontaneous acts and reactive responses to others’ interpretations of their racialized selves. They stressed to me, as the researcher, their understanding and development of their own capacity to reflect and deliberate upon others’ interpretations of themselves. In emphasizing this, I can hear Makeda’s voice insisting, “It’s not my crisis - it’s theirs!”

Through their choices in discussing particular acts of racial performativity with me, I read participants’ selves as a “motivated set of practices that foreground and hopefully encourage the

¹⁶ Like Chow, I am wary of ultimately giving subjectivity the last word in my analysis. Chow criticizes cultural studies explorations “[which conclude] ‘oh, it’s open-ended, it’s hybrid, it’s contradictory, and it’s a continual opening up’ and so forth...that is fine but it doesn’t go far enough” (Chow in *Discipline and Place Collective* 1997:512). If I have focused on the varied productions of the self, it is because I have been preoccupied with revealing the ways in which participants subvert dominant racialized norms, where the “doing of race differently” holds in the balance the potential to “undo” socially constructed racialized categories.

¹⁷ I am wary of the metaphor of depth and surface in models of performativity and much prefer Probyn’s reading of surface, where “the surface is not another metaphor...it is a profound re-ordering of how we conceive of the social” (Probyn 1996:34).

necessary movement of identities" (Probyn 1993:167). Probyn sees this self as carrying with it a doubled movement: it "expresses a matter of becoming as well as being" where the self is a scattered "ensemble of critical techniques" (Probyn 1993:167-168). An emphasis upon context provides a way of moving the dialogue along from one which focuses upon the individual's performance of a racialized identity, towards imagining identities as "being produced in relation to other people at specific times and places" (Walker 1995:71). By focusing upon the particular temporal contingency of these performances, I have attempted to show how "the self is not contained in any one moment or place, it can be made to appear at certain intersections" (Probyn 1993:167). Novelist Jeanette Winterson reads the self as "not contained in any moment of any place, but it is only in the intersection of moment *and place* that the self might, for a moment, be seen vanishing through a door, which disappears at once" (my emphasis, Winterson 1989:80). Participants open up the possibility of the self as process, where the "self is not simply put forward, but rather is reworked in its enunciation" (Probyn 1993:2). Unveiling the performative strategies among participants reveals their understanding of racialized processes - and how they acknowledge their ability to intervene and disrupt racialized social scripts. By enacting racial performativity, participants recognize their complex role in a sea of social meanings, where they grasp and take control of racialized readings of their selves.

As a final note, somewhat ironically, women of multiethnicity in this study actually share very little apart from currently living in Toronto. Their phenotypes are radically dissimilar. Their jobs vary widely. Some are mothers, some are culture vultures, others are lesbians, and their friends, family and hobbies are very different. However, they do share similar experiences around racial classifications, where perceptions of their phenotypes are alike. They told me about the shifting ways in which their identities are read in a variety of spheres; their disenchantment with particular identity classifications; and the subsequent development of strategies to thwart those stifling categories. I hope I have successfully demonstrated in my empirical work that agency among multiethnic women in this study emerges as a continual negotiation of the regulatory fictions of race, in which mobile paradoxical spaces are inhabited, and at the same time, multiple subjectivities performed.

CHAPTER EIGHT: CONCLUSION

Reconciling the Solitudes

8.1 INTRODUCTION

“All is race; there is no other truth” (Disraeli 1927:153)

“Whether you live by a lie or live by a truth makes no difference, as long as you get past the wall” (from Anne Michaels’ novel Fugitive Pieces)

In the thesis, I have mapped out the racialized experiences of women of multiethnicity in Toronto, Canada. I have explained how women of multiethnicity in this study negotiate, challenge and contest hierarchical categories of identity. This thesis has developed new ways of reading the racialized and gendered experiences of multiethnic women by describing how participants practice an “un-natural” discourse (Kobayashi and Peake 1994) to disrupt dominant racialized meanings.

In this final chapter, I first wish to point out some of the defining features of the interview population before summarizing the empirical analysis. Secondly, I will suggest some future research projects in critical “mixed race” studies by returning to my “race 101” section as examined in chapter one. Thirdly, I will propose some broad policy suggestions in light of the findings. Finally, I muse over some potential avenues in feminist geography as illuminated by the research.

Defining features of the interview population Firstly, I want to emphasize that this study should not be regarded as definitive in its intent nor complete in its portrayal. As a multiethnic woman myself, I arrived on the scene weighed down with my own explanations and understandings of multiethnicity. Throughout the practice of conducting and writing through this research, it has dawned upon me that there are many diverse and multifaceted experiences of multiethnicity that have yet to be expressed and analysed satisfactorily. The process of writing this thesis has both shattered and confirmed many of my initial interpretations.

The women I interviewed represent a limited range of experiences, especially in regards to the dimension of class. This is a particularly potent issue. The voices of the women in this study

reflect their upper to middle class status. I deliberately chose to interview middle class women as it has been demonstrated that women of lower economic classes may not necessarily identify as multiethnic (Root 1990). I acknowledge that the majority of the women interviewed were highly educated and thus their transcripts reflect their academic familiarity with feminist theory and cultural studies. Thus, the narratives add articulate readings to current critical "mixed race" theory outside of the psychological arena, where previous studies have focused their efforts.

It is also key to note that a large proportion of the women interviewed were in fact journalists. Given this tendency, I believe many of the women deliberately provided thoughtful academic views of multiethnicity, knowing full well that my interests were academic, not media-oriented. In light of this salient observation, this particular study should not be regarded as an exhaustive reading of multiethnic identity. I would suggest that further research explore the experiences among multiethnic women of varying class status and in particular lower class in order to examine alternative experiences of multiethnicity.

I also acknowledge that I cut the wealth of empirical material in specific ways in order to challenge the assumption that multiethnic status is not mentally healthy (Nakashima 1996; Root 1996; Thornton 1996). I deliberately chose not to dwell excessively upon the derogatory myths about multiethnic individuals in favour of focusing upon how those very myths are countered among participants. Women of multiethnicity negotiate, challenge and contest hierarchical and oppressive categories of identity construction, disrupting conventionally prescribed representations of the multiethnic woman. By focusing on a small group in an intensive micro-level account, the research has sought to reveal the complexities and inherent contradictions of multiethnic experiences.

As I have mentioned in chapter three, "Same Differences? Challenging insider/outsider positionings" I also chose not to focus upon the usual markers of studies in critical "mixed race" theory, like the desire among multiethnic individuals to assimilate into one of their parents' ethnic groups. Much of the research reiterates that multiethnic individuals experience prejudice from their mother's and/or father's ethnic groups (C.Hall 1996). While these themes did emerge in interviews, they did not figure as a significant part of our discussions. Women in this study

deliberately emphasized with me their wide array of identification options available to them in a racialized and gendered world. While I acknowledge the importance of documenting how multiethnic individuals read their relationship with their parents' ethnic groups, I chose not to focus upon these stories because I feel that these features of the multiethnic experience have already been explored elsewhere in part (Root 1996). Instead, I examined the ways participants deliberately dislodged dualistic representations of their multiethnic identity as either liberating or constraining by explaining that they mostly read their multiethnic status as advantageous while recognizing how their multiethnicity and power investments associated with their difference are articulated and managed. Many participants explained that they feel very much part of both their parents' ethnic groups simultaneously, while also occupying membership within the camp of "mixed race" identity as well. They also painstakingly pointed out the many pitfalls in reifying the category of "mixed race", carefully refusing to paint a portrait of multiethnic individuals holding the seeds of hope for future racial harmony. This study has examined the ways in which racialized constraints are translated and transformed in interaction with others.

Summarizing the findings I initially began this study in order to challenge our compulsion to classify. This thesis has demonstrated how women of multiethnicity effectively challenge and resist strict and rigid racial classifications. Participants emphasized the inadequacy of racialized categories to encompass a paradoxical and multiplicitous shifting reality. To combat being slotted into racial categories, women in this study form their own identities and transcend culturally constructed borders to form new alliances and connections with others.

Such challenges to foundational categories can provide implications for the way we write in geography. I have thus located theory in my empirical chapters by demonstrating the various kinds of slippage occurring between our theorizing of race and gender and the actual life-worlds of participants. The narratives force us to confront the very real, pervasive and essentialist dualisms inherent in our thinking. My emphasis has been upon deconstructing hierarchies, paradoxes and binaries in theoretical debates by providing examples of the ways that participants negotiate fixed categories of identity.

For example, in chapter one, entitled "Contesting old categories - creating new cartographies" I discussed my own personal paradoxical position as a woman of multiethnicity whose racial identity is read in a myriad of ways over a variety of places. I explored the paradox of race: namely, how race has come to be viewed as a social construction among contemporary social theorists, and yet at the same time remains a powerful mode of social stratification. I also explored how the use of the term "ethnicity" was put forth as a more socially acceptable replacement for the term "race". I then voiced a series of concerns over the use of the term "mixed race" to describe participants in this study by explaining how the use of the phrase can prevent promising epistemological explorations of the experience of racism. Much like Keith, I wish to reiterate that "language is not innocent" (Keith 1988:44) as using the word "race" endows it with significance. It is a term that is not linked simply to skin colour - rather, it is associated with a host of economic, social and political issues.

In chapter two, "Racial Refiguring - developing "un-natural" discourses in feminist geography" I drew from various literatures in psychology, racial science and cultural geography on race and feminism in order to demonstrate how the multiethnic person has been made intelligible in ways which continue to maintain the relations of the racialized hierarchy. Therefore, multiethnic individuals who cross "the colour line" are often seen as being "out of place". By integrating insights from current cultural and feminist geography approaches which illuminate how identities are constructed differently in different places, I argued for a gender-specific, in-depth situated analysis of multiethnicity in order to set the stage for the empirical investigation.

In chapter three, "Same Differences? Challenging insider/outsider positionings" I deconstructed the particular dualism of insider/outsider positionings by examining my own complicit stance as a woman of multiethnicity carrying out research on other women of multiethnicity. By focusing upon the particulars of the interview process, where I deliberately employed open-ended questions to provide space for the participant to guide the course of the interview, as well as participated in conversation with participants, I explored the complex and paradoxical politics of my own disclosure during the interviews. The primary advantage of my methodological choice was that it allowed me to contemplate the ways women of multiethnicity prioritize their own readings of their multiethnicity as opposed to imposing my own strict

agenda upon the interview process. I also questioned how the presumption of shared multiethnicity insinuates a single constituency of experience. Other axes of similarity may prove more salient regarding similar processes of racialization - like class status and light skin privilege. I explained that it is important not to assume that all multiethnic women share similar experiences by virtue of their multiethnic status. Finally, I argued that we need to map out varied "landscapes of power" (Rose 1997c) taking place during the research process.

In chapter four, "Interrogating Hyphen-nation: Canadian multicultural policy and multiethnic identities" I examined how participants in this study contemplated the policy of multiculturalism. I addressed the paradox of multicultural policy as reflected in the narratives of women, who explained that while the term "multicultural" connotes nuances of diversity and equality, as a cultural representation, it carries with it a series of contradictions which can mask underlying racial animosities. By arguing that the policy produces particularly hierarchical spaces against which multiethnic women imaginatively negotiate and challenge perceptions of their racialized selves, I suggested that participants often create new reconstitutions of cultural citizenship outside the model of the "two solitudes" in Canada.

In chapter five, "Complexion: Racing through whiteness" I disrupted the dualisms and meanings associated with black and white as racial categories. I firstly explored the emerging literature on whiteness as discussed among contemporary social theorists (Fine *et al.* 1997; Frankenberg 1997). I argued that discourses on race rely upon a particular binary opposition, where whiteness is pitted against blackness. Furthermore, I suggested that whiteness is a regulatory fiction, contemplated as a site of privilege and power. Rather than taking whiteness as a self-evident category for analysis, I chose to explore how attributes generally associated with whiteness, including skin colour and privilege, are constructed in various ways and contexts among participants in this study. Women of multiethnicity are seen as neither black nor white, yet both at times, within particular socio-economic contexts. As Marical argued, "it doesn't work for me to just have black or white as categories...your identity's always, you know changing depending on where you are." I illustrated how several participants in this study negotiate this paradox by resisting dominant discourses of whiteness by publicly acknowledging whiteness a site of privilege and power, while personally choosing to disengage from their own perceived whiteness

in society by adopting particular cultural cues. In other words, I deconstructed the notion of whiteness as a reified universal trait by challenging its links with power and domination, claiming that whiteness cannot be seen as a self-evident category for analysis when one is doubly marked as both black and white in particular spaces.

Chapter six, "I'm a blonde-haired blue eyed black girl: mapping mobile paradoxical spaces", continued to focus upon the importance of exploring contradictions by developing a new spatial metaphor in order to demonstrate some of the more complicated and paradoxical alliances multiethnic women forge outside of ties to their own ethnicities. To do so, I proposed the notion of "mobile paradoxical spaces" inspired by the work of Gillian Rose and Elspeth Probyn as a legend to map out the continually changing configurations of belonging among participants. In order to move away from particularly oppressive and hierarchical models of exclusion, where the multiethnic individual has been read as being "out of place" as I described in chapter two, I explored the productive spaces that are created out of a desire to create connections. I specifically examined how participants challenged, contested and negotiated the label of "mixed race" as a personal identification. I suggested that women of multiethnicity weave complex tapestries of alliances and affiliations in order to transcend totalizing categories of identity, creating new mappings of allegiances in spaces which echo the theoretical explorations of Rose and Probyn.

In my final empirical chapter, "Tricking the border guards: performing race" I engaged primarily with my own research diary, the voices of participants, and Butler's theoretical exploration of performativity to examine the parallels that can be drawn between Butler's notion of gendered identities and the idea of performative racial identities. Women of multiethnicity continually challenge and contest racialized labels by putting into practice a varied set of racialized performances in particular places which reveal the very social construction of racialized categories. They offer a reconsideration of the construction of racial identity as an inner essence. Unveiling these performative strategies revealed participants' understandings of racialized processes, as well as their ability to intervene and disrupt racialized social scripts.

To summarize, each empirical chapter has engaged with theory to explore alternative readings of multiethnicity. I examined the intersections among theory, narratives and my own experience of multiethnicity in order to engage in an imaginative dialogue which spilled over traditional academic and personal borders. My project in juxtaposing the work of (mostly feminist) theorists with narratives is not to trivialize the former but to occasion new reflections on multiethnicity. I have suggested that matters of multiethnicity are infinitely more nuanced than have been previously envisioned.

Throughout the dissertation, I have been concerned with challenging the compulsion to classify in both theory and practice by demonstrating the paradoxical nature of contextual and shifting identifications among participants. In the next section, I return to my "race 101" section to explore the contribution that this dissertation makes to critical race theory.

8.2 RETURNING TO "RACE 101"

"If racial and ethnic experience constitute a divide that cannot be spoken, an even greater paradox is the degree to which a sense of commonality may be simultaneously created as well as threatened by notions of ethnicity and race" (Williams 1997:10)

In the first chapter, I explained that race radically simplifies identities and makes them comprehensible by selectively identifying certain physical characteristics, and giving them significance towards the legitimization of particular forms of oppression. I return to my "race 101" section in order to explore the ramifications of this research for current conceptualizations of race.

It is my hope that the empirical chapters actively demonstrated that participants live the ironies of a racist society. By playing and performing with, and sometimes even disarming preconceived notions of race, participants illustrate that race is more complicated than skin colour and phenotype. Ideas around race are continually relational in any given transaction, where racial categories are themselves defined in particular contexts for particular purposes.

Despite society's effort to keep racial lines intact, some participants reveal a practice of speaking an "un-natural discourse" (Kobayashi and Peake 1994) by reworking the intelligibility of their racialized identities to disrupt socially constructed myths which emerge from falsely based

notions of racial superiority. They demonstrate an ability to complicate and obfuscate racial categories. Participants make the most of moments in the negotiation of their daily encounters where there appears to be an emphasis upon multiple ethnic *allegiances* as opposed to a static ethnic *identity*, most clearly demonstrated in chapter seven, "Tricking the border guards: performing race." The demand for self-identification in the discourse on difference imparts a particular autobiographical relevance to ethnic identity, where ethnicity is invariably related to issues of individual family histories and not based upon the present, but upon the past (Zack 1995). Many participants explained that their experience of racism was wholly tied to the ways in which others determined their supposed attachment to an ethnicity, rather than their own personal ethnic allegiances. I argue that we need to realize that race is not simply about genetic history. Rather, I suggest that one's personal allegiance to ethnicity reflects a wide and infinite process of identity construction, where ethnic identity is a dynamic process, influenced by experiences, maturity, and class, light skin privilege, among other factors. These womens' stories awaken us to the fact that ethnic identifications and coalitions are always more complex than can be represented through any hierarchical or binary structuring of social antagonism which forms the bedrock of racist ideologies. Such an understanding forces us to see human differences as socially constructed, which is essential in order to transcend the oppressive concept of race.

8.3 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

"In the political process...professionals talk at politicians who leak to journalists who are lectured by academics who scrutinise any policy pronouncement..." (Keith and Rogers 1991:5)

I approach this section on potential policy interventions with much caution. As Keith insists, "it is worth keeping the significance of academic discourse in its proper perspective" (Keith 1989:303). As the focus of this thesis has never been questions of policy, I am loathe to make disingenuous, naive or superficial policy recommendations. However, I wish to draw out a few themes to make some very brief suggestions in light of the empirical research.

Most significantly, the empirical analysis indicates how little we still know about multiethnic identity in Canada. In spite of the reality that Canada is increasingly becoming more multiethnic (Department of Canadian Heritage 1991) there remains a dearth of literature available on how

multiethnic individuals negotiate interpretations of their racialized and gendered selves. In this section, I emphasize that this research poses a challenge to three policy areas: multicultural policy, anti-racist guidelines, and current census design regarding ethnic categories in Canada. I will engage with each of these in turn.

Multicultural policy The implications of my empirical work throws into question the virtues of multicultural policy. The stark reality that many participants did not look positively upon multicultural policy as an effective anti-racist tool suggest that such efforts need to be further problematized. Such a policy has unfortunately acted to reinforce stereotypical views of people of colour. The present debate over multicultural policy should be extended to encompass the vernacular understandings of these women's discursive and material engagement with national and ethnic allegiances. One of the most salient messages gleaned from the research is the continued proliferation of racism in the lives of participants despite the policy of multiculturalism. Many individuals continue to have less access to productive and supportive networks to combat racism. I suggest that part of the problem is multicultural policy's steadfast refusal to discuss race as a social constructed social divide, where seemingly "real" biological differences are used to justify social and economic inequalities and injustice. Future policy development ought to recognize how race is linked to a series of social, political and economic issues - and this point needs to be communicated through the government's already rich wealth of pamphletting and outreach programmes as I demonstrated in chapter four, "Interrogating Hyphen-nation".

My research has emphasized that women of multiethnicity find it difficult to identify as "Canadian" despite their desire to do so because of systematic racism and dominant definitions of the national narrative as "white". In my section on cultural citizenship, I explained how many participants claimed a Canadian identity as a potentially productive identification linked to their own multiethnicity. Conventional definitions of race, gender and nation are negotiated and contested among participants. Clearly, issues of race are inextricably intertwined with both class, gender and nation. I suggest further research examine the legislation which configures particular racial and sexist dynamics, as well as explore the ways the tensions pulling on these

dynamics are spatialized. This would acknowledge how individuals are raced, classed and gendered in particular spaces.

Anti-racist policies The stories narrated by multiethnic women demonstrate how both racism and sexism can be interrupted which may have implications for potential anti-racist policies. Again, I point out that I am tentative to make overarching anti-racist policy suggestions as I have not focused upon anti-racism in this study (I refer the reader to Bonnett 1995). However, turning to examine the links between anti-racism and feminist geography, Kobayashi and Peake suggest that in order to understand and undermine sexism and racism, it is necessary to “unnaturalize the landscapes upon which gendered and racialized meanings are played out” (Kobayashi and Peake 1994:239). Participants effectively demonstrate an ability to do just that. Women of multiethnicity negotiate racialized positions in what could be deemed “the art of social survival” (Matthews 1997:16). I have attempted to unveil those complex negotiations in my research by focusing upon the productive sites of multiethnicity, rather than reading multiethnicity as oppressive or tragic. At the same time, however, I have cautioned against positioning women of multiethnicity as models for future racial harmony, where they represent the “best of all worlds.” Instead, I have chronicled stories about the specific strategies participants employ in order to get on and get by in both a racialized and gendered world. Women in this study do not escape racism nor sexism, but develop ways of reworking the trap of both ideologies to the best of their ability. I believe that compiling these sorts of strategies may be helpful in developing potentially powerful anti-racist tools in the future, in order to serve Kobayashi and Peake’s call to develop anti-racist scholarship which “breaks free of its economic and androcentric tendencies” (Kobayashi and Peake 1994:228). I suggest asking how it is that multiethnic individuals employ their identities through cross-cultural sensitivity and perspective in professional situations, where they may be more likely to emphasize that the differences between ethnic groups are surmountable while challenging the notion of a “bona fide” racial group (Williams 1996). It has been offered that many multiethnic individuals may be in ideal positions to appreciate, respect and convey the potential alliances across various racialized communities in the workplace, for example (Scales-Trent 1995).

Census design The results of this research also provide important information regarding the importance of census design. Currently, individuals and groups are fighting for inclusion of “mixed race” categories on the national census forms (C.Hall 1996, Graham 1996). Women of multiethnicity in this study refuse to classify themselves solely within binary slots of either black, white, or other. Although the number of multiethnic individuals have increased in Canada (Department of Canadian Heritage 1991) government officialdom has yet to recognize this identity on census forms. Many of the participants in this study voiced their frustration with filling out official forms where they were forced to identify as black or white when they felt themselves to be neither nor or both. It seems reasonable for government bodies to begin to recognize this officially by including the category of “multiethnic” in the list of potential ethnic categories. I would suggest that individuals ought to be allowed to check off a myriad of ethnic identifications in order to demonstrate their multiple ties.

8.4 FUTURE RESEARCH ON MULTIETHNICITY

In the next section, I will suggest three potential avenues for future work in critical “mixed race” theory. Firstly, I propose a more place-specific analysis of the experience of multiethnicity in particular areas of the city. Secondly, I suggest some alternative ways that the media may be able to portray multiethnicity. Finally, I emphasize the importance of examining the thoughts and feelings of multiethnic individuals on topics other than race.

Experiences of places This thesis initially emerged out of my own personal desire to explore the lives of multiethnic women in Toronto, where there is a need to understand questions of ethnic multiplicity in light of the city’s increasing ethnic diversity (Department of Canadian Heritage 1991). While I did not avoid discussing the “material traumas” of living in the urban area (Keith and Rogers 1991:13), I realize that participants’ experiences of Toronto as a multicultural city have largely been unexplored in this study. This simply was not a prevalent theme in interviews. When I did ask participants about their experiences of racialization at particular Toronto landmarks, their interviews revealed a lack of specificity which may be due to the particular open-ended style of my interview questions. Thus, my interviews did not explore how participants negotiate their identities differently in specific Toronto locales. Future academic research ought to contemplate the specific racialized and gendered experience of

multiethnic individuals *in particular places*. I suggest that explorations could address why it is that multiethnic individuals are attracted to cities and what they find in large urban cores that is more readily available than in a less ethnically diverse environment.

Media coverage I would like to propose some directions for future media coverage of the multiethnic experience, given my own history as a journalist as well as the reality that many participants were journalists, not to mention the recent attention given to multiethnic issues in the popular media (Streeter 1996). The media has a salient role in disseminating ideas regarding race and identity. However, mass media often views race as a solely black-white concern. When race is enunciated at the contemporary moment, the black-white binary is often immediately invoked in storylines, and race becomes the marked term for all “people of colour” whereas whiteness is ignored. I have previously examined the important historical and ideological reasons behind the persistent power of this binary in both chapter two, “Racial Refiguring” and chapter five, “Complexion”. However, it is imperative to implicitly problematize the black-white binary in media explorations as well. I continue to argue for the political weight of media productions of, by and about multiethnic individuals. Documentaries on multiethnic people can provide critical insight into how and why race has become such a salient tool to differentiate, mark and rank groups of people. Paradigms of race difference are directly challenged by introducing their stories. In Canada there are few documentaries on the experience of multiethnicity (Thakur 1994). Often, in these productions, the multiethnic experience is often read as a “problem”. This reflects a crystallization of a complex situation into a dichotomous struggle, reflecting the media’s inability to see beyond dualisms which subsequently obscures multiple truths about the experience of multiethnicity. Secondly, people of multiethnicity are imagined as black/white only, demonstrated through the “passing” narrative in the media genre and the multiethnic individual’s successful or unsuccessful attempts at transgressing the boundary that distinguishes black from white (Streeter 1996). Thirdly, there is often an exaggerated emphasis upon the individual’s experience of multiethnicity within the family context without taking into consideration the complex socio-historical contexts of miscegenation and racist taboos in Canada.

Thus, I suggest that it is important to explore the narratives of individuals who are of a vast array of ethnic mixes in order to deconstruct the black/white binary inherent in so many stories about race. Secondly, it is imperative to situate these stories in their historical and sociopolitical contexts to illuminate some of the dramatic shifts that many participants explicitly make possible regarding the transcendence of racial categories. I hope to expose the ugly realities of the racism which influence multiethnic experiences while exploring the history of laws and regulations concerning multiethnic contact, sexuality and economics, demonstrated through various forms of restriction and prohibition. Without an understanding of this grim history, viewers acquire only a partial and ahistorical view of entrenched and deterministic racial conflict. I also plan to write a fictionalized play on the experiences of multiethnicity as I believe theatre in particular has the power to highlight the performativity of gender, race and nation. I hope to offer a local, small-scale alternative to blockbuster theatre performances like "Miss Saigon" running in Toronto's theatre district, a play whose proliferation of oppressive Asian stereotypes deploys deeply disturbing images, reflecting a troubling politics of representation. Writing a play for, about and including a cast of multiethnic individuals will complicate matters by refusing the comfort of conventional binary categories towards speaking of opposition with greater precision. By literally staging emergent identities which reverberate with energy, I hope to contribute towards emerging new forms of political and academic interventions and alliances.

Exploring topics other than race Finally, among the topics missing in research on multiethnic individuals is an understanding of how they feel about topics *other than* race. In examining only race and ethnic identity among multiethnic individuals, researchers often ignore the broader person (Thornton 1996). Race historically has been used to identify multiethnic individuals in unforgivable disproportion to the whole persons they long to be. My own research has barely hinted at some possibilities for a new engagement with class and gender dynamics among multiethnic individuals, where we ask not only how multiethnic individuals are raced, but also how they are gendered and classed in particular ways. Where in their range of life roles do they place their experience of multiethnicity? How do ethnic identity and other factors relate? We require new stories which further disrupt the binary interpretation of the multiethnic experience: stories which explore further how multiethnic status is not inevitably problematic nor simply a pathway to racial salvation. An emphasis on the contradictory and paradoxical nature of

multiethnicity identity contests a portrayal of multiethnicity as problematic, a recurring theme of much debate on multiethnic individuals. By focusing upon the microstrategic choices employed by multiethnic women in their day- to- day lives in order to combat racism, I have viewed identity as interactive and contextual, paradoxical and contradictory simultaneously.

8.5 POTENTIAL LESSONS FOR FEMINIST GEOGRAPHY

“...the subversive intent of feminist geography - our suspicion is that there is something different going on beyond what our discipline can say” (Rose 1993a:138).

In this final section, I wish to make some suggestions towards a renewed feminist geography. Feminist geography in the past few decades has concentrated upon the importance of understanding diversity among women *as being constituted differently over space* (Rose 1993a; McDowell 1993a and 1993b). This thesis has demonstrated that claim in two ways. Firstly, it not all multiethnic women, regardless of their location or as a discrete social category, who are read as threatening or dangerous. To say this implies a fixity of racial classifications. Rather, it is the multiethnic woman's individual presence *in particular places* that renders her excluded. Bondi's phrase again resonates with me, where a politics of identity is always a politics of location (Bondi 1993; Probyn 1990). The same woman who is read as an outsider in one place may be read as an insider in another. This is communicated most clearly in chapter five, where some participants are raced as both black and white in various spaces, and chapter seven, where some informants described varied examples of racial performativity.

Secondly, not all multiethnic women disrupt and transgress racial lines. Many multiethnic women do not choose not to identify as “mixed race”, decide to pass as white, or consciously decide to veil their ethnicities because of the racism expressed in their home or workplace, among a host of other reasons. Thus, the reading of the multiethnic woman is interpreted differently over various spaces, dependent upon a wide array of factors. I will now contemplate how these womens' voices may make a contribution to a renewed feminist geography with an emphasis upon alliances and affinities as opposed to differences among women.

In chapter two, I demonstrated that the emergence of particular paradigms - the deconstructionist turn and the discourse on difference - reflect an attempt to unravel political

practices whose skewed logics are inherited from the enlightenment period (Hooper 1995; Kobayashi and Peake 1994). However, I argued that this discourse privileges the notion of difference among individuals. If we focus solely upon difference, we often merely reinforce the categories that separate us (Scales-Trent 1995). I am particularly concerned about the implications of this "love affair with difference" in feminist theory. By placing emphasis on the characteristics that differentiate the category of "woman" to which they belong from other groups (race and class for example), difference has become the all important axis upon which, it seems, feminist analyses rest. The discourse on difference has come to provide a rationale for social fragmentation, where it has become increasingly difficult to articulate the specificity of coalitions and discussions among women of varying backgrounds and experiences in projects of collective identity. As a result, feminist theory has been plagued by the dilemma of how to speak for women while at the same time wishing to deconstructing the category of "woman" as Rose asks: "How can feminists imagine themselves, and other women...without neglecting the profound differences among women?" (Rose 1995c:241).

In the search for ways to bridge this impasse, feminists have insisted in their theory upon the importance of *forging alliances* between groups who are differently positioned. Weir declares: "a reformulation and reconstruction of the self which could include difference, connection and heterogeneity is one of the most important tasks facing contemporary feminist theorists" (Weir 1996:184). Weir is not alone, as many other feminists have been concerned with the same call. For example, McDowell insists, "[we] need to ask ourselves not only what are our differences, but what are our commonalities?" (McDowell 1996a:43). Rose recognizes the importance of alliances in struggle, where the "differences of others is acknowledged and strategic alliances forged. The spaces of separatism [would then become] space[s] of interrelations" (Rose 1993a:153). Watson and Gibson request "neither passivity nor inaction" but rather "strategic interventions and alliances" (Watson and Gibson 1995:262). Probyn insists that the development of alliances across various positions means searching for similarities and common interests among women in widely separate geographic spheres towards relations of belonging that peacefully and joyfully coexist (Probyn 1996:153). Chouinard asks, "how do we deal with different identities and build practical coalitions?" (Chouinard in Harvey and Haraway 1995:524). Mohanty further suggests that feminists develop "potential alliances across divisive boundaries

[in the creation of] a horizontal comradeship" (Mohanty 1991:4), where we can contemplate "potential points of alliance across racial differences" (Pratt 1997:362). I could go on. Suffice it to say the abundant theme is clearly one which calls for potential alliances and the forging of coalitions among different kinds of women, women who are, at the same time, differently subjugated in different spheres.

This paradox does not escape feminist geographers. While feminist geography unequivocally advocates a renewed feminist politics of alliance and coalition, the actual practice of mapping out this political project remain elusive at best. I sympathize with these desires, but am struck by the paucity of literature which actually addresses how feminist geographers can imagine these spaces. If feminists hope to acknowledge joint struggles in spatiality, then how can we contribute to these theoretical desires?

I can provide no magical solution to this dilemma. It is a hard question and cannot be answered flippantly. However, I have tried to map out with care how spaces of joint affinities might be envisioned in the concrete by focusing upon the lived experiences of women in this study. During their interviews, participants focused upon the importance of alliances across differences, mapping out shared organizing principles of struggle among a diverse population.

Many informants considered positionality and the power that accompanies some situations and not others, where race and gender represent only a few of the dynamics which structure those relations. They emphasized their ability to move among a variety of multiple groups across social divides, where simultaneous and multiple group membership is possible. I have attempted to unveil the textured stories of participants who create worlds where coalitions are imaginatively forged.

I propose that women of multiethnicity provide a way to imagine the potential of bridging the impasse between the infinite array of differences among women and the critique of the analytical category of "woman". Participants recognize the large range of diversity and difference among individuals while choosing to emphasize *shared commonalities* among themselves and other groups, outside and through, racialized categories. They create effective geographies of

inclusion, seeing differences with respect while recognizing the connectedness that can be drawn between individuals. This can be illustrated through particular examples in my empirical work.

For example, in my first empirical chapter, "Interrogating Hyphennation: Canadian multicultural policy and multiethnic identities", I demonstrated how women of multiethnicity contest ideas about the nation as constituted through the policy of multiculturalism in Canada. To counter the dominant discourse of the national narrative, participants develop nuanced models of cultural citizenship, thus illustrating that national identities are formed and transformed in relation to representation. Rather than simply positioning themselves outside the nation, they effectively produce their own meanings by working through their own personally identified multiethnic bodies to the national body politic. They actively reconstitute and re-present the idea of the nation as represented in Canadian culture by adopting various allegiances to the nation.

In chapter five, "Complexion: Racing through whiteness" I explored dominant discourses of whiteness as delineated in the literature in "white studies". Although many of the women I interviewed were seen as white in particular places, they deliberately avoided those conceptualizations by forging new alliances away from whiteness, often creating commonalities with other ethnic groups through the adoption of particular cultural cues, like clothing or changing their names to appear "less white". Rather than take whiteness as a self-evident category for analysis, I looked at the ways in which attributes associated with whiteness are constituted differently in various places for participants in this study.

In chapter six, "I'm a blonde haired, blue eyed, black girl: mapping mobile paradoxical spaces" I explored the complex and often contradictory relationship multiethnic women forge with the identification of "mixed race". I examined the various ways participants reproduce and rework the term conceptually while not abandoning completely the use of the label in order to contest social injustices and inequalities associated with the limiting classifications of race. Participants demonstrated their ability to develop alliances across traditional social cleavages by inhabiting "mobile paradoxical spaces", reading their own multiethnic status as a way of being an interpreter as well as recognizing marginality in others. I argued that participants actively shuffle the placement of power, centres and peripheries. In addition to experiencing

simultaneous membership in their various ethnic groups, many participants also acknowledged membership in the “mixed race” camp. By developing complex and unconventional alliances, women in this study effectively render incomprehensible the phrase “Where are you from?” as they cannot easily trace the path back to where they “belong”. The process of forming several belongings ensures that the route back to fictional roots is difficult, if not impossible.

Finally, in my last empirical chapter, “Tricking the border guards: performing race” I demonstrated how participants disrupt racialized perceptions of their identity by enacting racial performativity in order to resist and undermine racist myths. I revealed the performative possibilities among participants by citing the proliferation of racial configurations within and through the restrictive frames of racist domination. Some participants offer glimpses of refigurative possibilities by reworking race in unexpected directions. By showing that fictions of identity are often part of the daily struggles among women of multiethnicity, I endeavoured to illustrate the idea of identity as a process and performance, further pointing out the malleability of ethnicity where participants adopt a range of innovative ethnic identifications without abandoning the self.

It is my hope that these stories provide examples of potentially rich alliances, where multiethnic women open up new ways of thinking and acting politically. Their multiple modalities suggest possibilities for creative oppositional ethnographies across racialized divides and the importance of forging urgently necessary new alliances. Participants actively discover common ground around a shared set of issues and at the same time acknowledge the contradictions of asserting a discrete “multiethnic experience” among women who are themselves divided by class position or ethnicity among other social cleavages. They effectively imagine “spatial[ities] that draw connections...inside a shared territory” (Keith and Pile 1993:18) by transcending singular geographies of exclusion (Sibley 1995) based solely around the axis of ethnicity.

Many women in this study deliberately explore potential spaces of alliances and affiliations because as racialized definitions change from time to time and from place to place, notions of sameness and difference are always in flux. Participants represent “mini-coalitions” in themselves (George 1996:33) bringing together several ideologies of race working towards “locations where all of [themselves can] feel at home” (ibid). They also recognize aspects of

themselves which give them certain privileges (visible through their ability to transcend racialized lines and forge new coalitions as evident in chapter six and chapter seven respectively, for example) and shape new sorts of geographies, geographies which are rife with complexity and contradiction. Many women emphasized their allegiance to many groups as opposed to their experiences of alienation. I have tried to encourage an optimistic climate for understanding the spaces of sociability by focusing upon the potential among women to resolve differences where participants struggle to make meanings through attempts to negotiate contradictions across racialized boundaries in association with others. These women actively participate in the subjective constitution of their own selves where they both contest social representations and at the same time engineer new cartographies of meaning, highlighting figurations of race and opening possibilities for subverting oppressive racial tropes.

Strategically choosing to identify differently in various places does not necessarily mean exclusivity nor the incapacity to acknowledge others. These stories hint at the possibility of a feminist geography project that affirms what we become *in process*, through particular struggles and strategies within very real hegemonic grids of power, a project which ultimately comprises the prospect of a more comprehensive identity through contact with a diverse range of individuals over spaces. I hope that feminist geography can draw from these example in order to ground Rose's call to map out potential "tactile spatialities", spaces in which "the territorialization of...space into same and different is resisted by subversion of the dualisms on which such territorialization depends" (Rose 1995e: 416).

Although I hope that feminist geographers will map out material and shared experiences among women, further illustrating the fluidity of discursive relations between and within communities, the very act of chronicling that fluidity will not be easy. Mapping these complex configurations of gendered and racialized movements in the social landscape propose a significant challenge to current explorations in feminist geography. Like Johnson (1994) I believe a progressive feminist geography needs to address the neglected issues of power fluctuations. Participants in this study clearly articulated that their own levels of privilege and power shift significantly in different arenas. Obviously, it is much simpler to map power when it is envisioned as an "all or nothing" phenomena. However, drawing from the work of Gibson-Graham (1996) I believe

that power spills everywhere, clearly indicative through many encounters that I have cited among multiethnic women in this study, where contradictory contestations and reinscriptions of power occur simultaneously. Power is best viewed as "a flow, a process, a pulsate - oscillating and undulating throughout the social world and working to pattern the degree of control people experience and have over their lives" (Plummer 1995:26). Power flows into lives, into encounters, and into various spatialities, where individuals attempted to negotiate racialized and gendered social orders at some times, making some situations creative and constitutive, whereas at other times, spaces become rigid and limiting.

As I have mentioned in chapter two, feminist geography has come a long way since its conception in the late seventies. Since then, we have witnessed an explosion of writing on womens' experiences, where feminist geographers have imaginatively mapped out the varied experiences of gender dynamics in places. In the last decade, feminist geographers have emphasized that gender and race must be understood as mutually constituted (Radcliffe 1998; Dwyer 1997; McDowell 1996a). Although feminist geographers have remarked on the dearth of explorations of both race and gender in geography (Kobayashi 1994; Sanders 1990) very few feminist geographers to my knowledge have attempted to unravel the complex interweave of the processes of racialization and gendered identities in various spaces (although see Dwyer 1997; Matthews 1997; Twine 1996). I realize I have not fully untangled those copious threads, and I hope that feminist geographers in the future will attend to these varied practices where we ask not only how racial relations are experienced and structured over space, but also how the spatial and social organization of racist hierarchies are experienced through the prism of gender. Analyses of changing gender identities ought to contemplate how gender is projected onto spaces, and how those figurations are inevitably reinscribed through the dimensions of race and class. Racial, gender, class and national identities should be thought through together, as mutually constitutive and defining. I see this thesis as only one tier in what must be a multi-tiered project. I have simply attempted to map out the processes through which some multiethnic women "trouble" racial lines in dramatically different ways, depending upon their location, demonstrating their agency and ability to deconstruct reified racial categories. This study may be envisioned as a map of alternative identifications which contest both the

possibility and desirability of a unitary definitions, a project which has implications for everyone living in a splintered and postmodern world.

I have argued that feminist geography can challenge the impasse between concerns of essentialism and the very real kinds of diversity and oppression experience among women by looking at how processes of racialized and gendered meanings are created in tandem in various spaces. Spaces are made meaningful through experience, interaction and interpretations of gendered and racialized selves. I hope that in the future, more research projects will explore how gendered selves are raced and raced selves are gendered simultaneously as well. Gender cannot be understood without exploring the complex figurations of race and power relations that continually re-inscribe and inform its construction.

I would further suggest that a productive feminist geography would take on board ways of contemplating the limits of gender as the sole manoeuvring axis for analysis. To do so incarnates a reification of sexual difference to the exclusion of all other differences. Like Johnson (1994) I see a danger in securing issues of identity around one stake without asking how other components play a role in determining how identities play out on the social landscape. I realize full well that I have not privileged the category of gender in this project. To address this omission, I insist that we can no longer work with, nor understand, gender as a category that exists independently (Kondo 1997; Duncan 1996). I echo the concerns of both Alcoff and Sharp who insist that "gender cannot be taken as 'conceptually primary'" (Alcoff 1996:25) nor as an "a priori category" (Sharp 1996:106). This thesis clearly indicates the problematic nature of categorization. By assuming that one can privilege gender in advance of all other categories automatically sets up terms of inclusion without fully considering that for some, the category fails to recognize the multiplicity of experience. I did choose to interview only women because phenotype is a prominent issue among women of multiethnicity "where physical appearance is embedded within a social context that classifies physical appearance as the most significant asset a woman possesses" (Root 1997:164). However, I focused upon the ways in which participants "embody mutually constitutive and mobile subject positionings" (Cream 1997:251) through the prism of race in particular. In considering positionality, I am curious to explore the kinds of power and privilege that comes from exercising some stances and not others.

I am also concerned about the increasing desire on behalf of contemporary and social theorists to talk about space without precisely defining what they mean by the term (Simonsen 1996; Smith and Katz 1993). Returning to my own research, one of the recurring themes that surfaced in narratives was that while race matters, geography can matter too (Massey and Allen 1984). I have encouraged a vision of spatialities as not simply passive surfaces upon which these stories are inscribed. Rather, I see space as constitutive of these narratives, where multiethnic women demand an ongoing negotiation and renegotiation of positionalities, negotiating their identities as racialized and gendered subjects at the same time. Any construction of a social situation - including the interview - is contextual, temporarily and ideologically framed, so that every inclusion is also an exclusion and that, paradoxically, opposites can be the same simultaneously. Although feminists have become increasingly attuned to the subtleties of spatial metaphors (hooks 1992) I have come to appreciate through my empirical work the importance of complicating spatial metaphors beyond dualisms (inside/outside; margin/centre) in order to contemplate new ones which are contextual and paradoxical. Feminist geographers need to remind social and contemporary theorists of the importance of exploring these dimensions in discussions of space, where we recognize how place, positionality and situationality are created and produced (Bondi 1993).

I also hope that future feminist geographies will pay attention to the complex dynamics of gendered and racialized meanings by challenging theoretical readings on flexible and fluid identities (Bhabha 1990). My research has contested the highly theoretical explorations on identity by pulling us back into the extraordinary complexity of the everyday. I do not read participants as as passive spectators who are racialized. I chose to emphasize how informants may be envisioned as embodied actors who engage with their life-worlds in imaginative and innovative ways, employing particular stances within the grids of racist and sexist containment and domination. It is necessary to consider multiethnic relations as co-constructed within other axes of domination and resistance - among them race and class, but also many more. Participants were clearly internally and externally differentiated by intersections with other unfolding relationships. They are actively engaged in re-drawing lines on the battlefield, effectively redefining the terrain on which racial contestation occurs.

Paradox, flexibility and contradiction are a way of life for many participants. Aided by the tools of subjectivity and performativity, participants create their own alliances by forging identifications with others across racialized lines. Women in this study demonstrated how they rework and negotiate their racialized selves differently in various places. In particular, chapter seven, "Tricking the border guards: performing race" attests to the enacting of particular strategies among participants. Multiethnic women in this study show that individuals deploy differential modes of opposition that situationally opt for the most effective strategy of the moment, where one cannot necessarily privilege the utility of one particular strategy in advance or for all-time.

Multiethnic researchers have increasingly become concerned with addressing microlevel activities and how they influence the macrolevel, calling for further explorations of the idea of agency where the multiethnic individual is positioned outside the label of victim in racialized encounters (Thornton 1996). In many ways, this thesis has focused upon the "quieter" forms of racism rather than systematic and institutional forms. I have encouraged local examinations which rely upon the individual's will to trouble racial lines because I believe one way to eradicate prejudice towards potential reconciliation across racialized boundaries depends upon fighting "the little blindnesses, not just the big" (Williams 1997:59).

The narratives foreground the profound stakes that participants have in challenging the continued circulation of racist tropes. I suggest that in the future, we reconceptualize our understanding of microlevel agency by focusing upon its particular spatial dimensions. I believe that agency is everywhere and the agency of the world is heterogeneously complex (Haraway and Harvey 1995:520). In this study I have emphasized "the intense capacity for agency everywhere amongst everything and everybody...and how it get[s] mobilized...between different people in different situations across different discursive realms" (ibid:518). I have been concerned with exploring how race, class and gender interact in "site-specific" (Mann 1994:159) ways, ways which would require a more dynamic and fluid model of agency than is currently available.¹ For example, many of the stories told by participants explore the various ways they

¹I would also argue that this approach would bolster attempts made on behalf of feminists who have argued

are racialized differently in different places, and how they devise particular strategies to counter those interpretations, as examined in chapter seven, "Tricking the border guards: performing race". Some recent work in feminist geography suggests imaginative conceptualizations of agency.² In envisioning agency in this manner, I have tried to contemplate a politics of location which implies that the subject can be located within a particular discursive and material matrix of power, resistance and subjectivities, where women "work" their various identities to their benefit.

8.6 CONCLUSION

This study makes a contribution to studies on race and gender in geography by suggesting that women in this study challenge dominant narratives about race by derailing the circulation of invidious myths regarding the experience of multiethnicity. Even though the constitution of the racial landscape cannot be thought through without invoking the polarity of white and black, participants in this study implicitly problematize essentialist notions of a racial hierarchy by demonstrating the complexities of the racialization process.

The limitations of dominant theoretical conceptions of race in geography partly result from the challenge in mapping out complex and continually shifting configurations of power. It is my hope that future explorations of race and gender in geography will unravel racialized and gendered meanings in particular places to demonstrate that gender and race are dynamics that are interpreted over spaces, and things that we *do*, rather than intrinsically *are*. By doing so, feminist geography may be able to better demonstrate how both gender and race are constituted differently over various places. Spatial processes are of fundamental importance as gendered and racial relations are negotiated and constructed through particular acts in different social spaces. Some spaces may necessitate particular configurations of race and gender. Examining how individuals transcend racial lines disrupts notions of racial purity and threatens the

for a re-envisioning of agency outside of masculinist readings (see Rose 1993a:38).

²I am inspired by Domosh's exploration of contextual agency as embodied through everyday transgressions, where agency can be defined only within a particular social context. This model recognizes the complexity of multiple positionalities (Domosh 1998).

exposure of the racialized, historicized character of gendered roles. This study in particular has emphasized the cross-currents of racialized and gendered networks of alliances which are crafted among participants.

Finally, I eagerly look forward to shared conversations where the ubiquity of race is acknowledged without necessarily conceding its inevitability. These womens' stories provide a glimmer of hope, a glimpse at the possibility that we can in fact listen across racialized divides, where the potential of being surprised *meta incognita*, or beyond the unknown (Moss 1998) is held in the balance. I have focused upon the development of a feminist geography with a renewed emphasis upon connections and affinities. It is my hope that these sorts of shared desires will move us towards mapping future feminist geographies which refuse to be caught in the paradox of either lazy essentialism or premature plurality, where our stories will reveal the brilliance of the extraordinary ways we employ our ordinary selves.

APPENDIX I

Thumbnail Sketches of Participants

Thumbnail sketches of the twenty-four women I interviewed follow. All names are pseudonyms. It is difficult to describe each of these women in a paragraph. However, I have simply delineated their age and remarked upon the ways *in which they described their ethnicities to me*, reflecting my specific intent to avoid my own classification of their ethnic identity. Finally, I hope to have captured some aspect of their personalities here by culling some points that participants stressed with me during the interview.

Zhaleh

Zhaleh is twenty-two years old, and “is half Japanese half white”. Her mother was born in Japan, and her father is “Canadian - he’s white”. She is currently finishing a B.A. at the University of Toronto. She grew up in the suburban town of Scarborough, located just outside Toronto and her neighbourhood was middle to upper class. She is currently taking Japanese language classes and wishes that her mother had taught her Japanese at home. She has one brother. She told me that she felt like a “well-adjusted person” despite the myth that people of multiethnicity suffer from identity problems. Most of her friends are either black or Asian, and she enjoys clubbing on the weekends. I observed Zhaleh at the coffee shop where she was working and asked her to consider being interviewed.

Makeda

Makeda is twenty-six years old, and completed both her undergraduate degree and M.A. at University of Toronto. I met her at a “mixed race” event in Toronto. Her M.A. thesis on Hiroshima will soon be published as a book. Her mother is Japanese, and her father is “English, white, white, born in England”, a foreign TV news correspondent. She lived in London, England until she was five, at which age her family moved to Toronto. Many of her summers were spent travelling and visiting family in Japan with her mother, which reflected her middle to upper-middle class status. She was pretty much “white identified” until high school, at which point she became involved with the Young Socialists and the anti-apartheid movement. It was this “bridge” (as she put it) that made her think about racism in Canada, not just away from home, which led to her participation in anti-racist movements. She is an only child. She writes and illustrates regularly for the “Globe and Mail”, Canada’s largest newspaper. Out of all my respondents, Makeda was the most versed in academic thought which was strongly reflected in our interview.

Julia

Julia is twenty-nine years old and a filmmaker in Toronto. I met her and another participant, Katya, at the premiere for a film on "mixed race" in 1994. She spoke very proudly of her parents - "they're very very strong, amazing people". It was evident that she had a supportive family network to draw from. Her mother is Asian from Hong Kong and her father is of German ancestry who grew up in a small farming community in northern Ontario. Her mother is a successful urban planner and her father a lawyer. She was adamant in telling me that she never felt like an outsider because she was mixed. Julia grew up in the upper class suburb of Toronto, Etobicoke and skipped two grades before eventually pursuing both a B.A., and then a film degree at Ryerson University in Toronto. She is now actively involved in the film industry in Toronto, where she runs her own film company and sits on the board of various organizations who fund ethnic filmmakers. She has two younger siblings. She has held down a variety of jobs, including a position designing software to teach police officers how to deal with racist incidents. She spent two months touring Taiwan through a special programme which encourages Asian students from around the world to visit the country. She has recently married, and is currently working on a film about a Canadian First Nations tribe.

Naela

The youngest of my interviewees, Naela is seventeen, an avid volleyball player and is involved with many extra-curricular activities and the anti-racism league. I met Carolyn after a radio producer told me he had interviewed her for a piece on employment equity in Toronto. She told me, "my mom is from Hong Kong, and my dad is white from New York." She has strong ties with her mother's side of the family, and although she has spent the majority of her life in Toronto, she did live in Japan for a year and a half. She speaks fluent Japanese. Her parents met when her father, who now teaches Japanese film at university, was on tour with a basketball team in Hong Kong, where Naela's mother was living. They fell in love and moved to Toronto. Although Naela comes from an upper class background, she attended a working-class public school, where she said that there were a lot of racial problems. She is now attending a upper middle class high school with a diverse ethnic population. She told me that in her household a rift has occurred where her sister cannot comprehend why Naela makes "such a big deal" out of race. Naela explained that she has always been interested in racial issues, and read Malcolm X in grade six, which influenced her so strongly that she didn't speak to her father (solely because he was white) for a short period of time. Although she laughs about the incident now - "things have become a lot more clear for me" - issues of race are still prominent in her life, evident through her participation in anti-racist theatre productions and political activism in general. Her anger and pain

regarding her experiences of non-acceptance from her mother's ethnic group were palpable during the interview.

Claudia

Claudia was twenty-nine at the time of the interview, and is "fourth-generation Canadian on both sides - my father's family is Japanese Canadian, and my father was born in an internment camp, and my mother's family is British, so Scottish, Irish and English". Although she was given an Anglicized name when she was born, Claudia tried informally to change her name to a more "ethnic" one from grade five onwards. She was not successful until grade thirteen when she attended school in Switzerland. After she completed her university studies, she changed her name legally. Claudia lived and taught English in Japan for three years, where she learned to speak Japanese fluently. While in Japan, she found it interesting that people saw her as a white person. Claudia grew up in a part of Toronto where there are strong Eastern European communities. She admired the strong connections that her friends had to their cultural heritage and longed for the same. She decided to explore her Japanese heritage because people constantly ask her if she is Japanese, but never ask her about her British ancestry. Although Claudia calls herself mixed, she told me that she is a different race from both her parents. She runs her own consulting company from home, and is completing an M.A. in sociology at night. She edits "Mixed Messages", a newsletter about Canadian multiethnic women and was referred to me by a mutual friend.

Emma

I met Emma, thirty-three, through my position at the Canadian Broadcasting Company, where Emma was working in news as a television producer. Her father was Malaysian, and her mother "British". She pursued an M.Sc. in journalism at Columbia University in New York and has worked in London, New York and Washington in news and documentary production. She vigorously repudiated fitting into any one racial category and reads her identity "in a way that isn't necessarily associated with a certain set of cultural values." She comes from an upper-middle class family, studied at a prestigious all-girls' private school in Toronto during her childhood, and attended a public high school in north Toronto. She told me that she didn't really think about issues of race growing up because she lived in an ethnically diverse neighbourhood. It wasn't until she moved to Washington that she realized how salient the white/black divide is in the US compared to Canada and it was this subject that became the focus of our interview. In university, she found she was very attracted to Chinese culture and took courses in Chinese history. She told me she likes to identify as "a salad of racial genes". She recently spent a month in Malaysia and now feels a tremendous sense of warmth and attachment to the country. Emma is now working in the London UK bureau for the CBC.

Rhiannon

Rhiannon's mother was born in China, and grew up in California. Her father was "born in Vermont, Irish, English mix". Rhiannon is twenty-nine, and studied at the liberal arts college of Oberlin in the United States, where she acquired a B.A. in history. Although she grew up in Montreal, she has lived in Toronto for most of her life. She insisted that she unintentionally subverted the stereotype of the tragic mixed-race heroine by having one of the happiest childhoods of anyone she knows, in part due to the tremendous support she received from her parents. She is bisexual, and has two older sisters. Rhiannon works at a community information centre now, and formed a "mixed race" discussion group in 1993. She has since dissolved the group and developed new interests - presently she is acting in a number of community and university plays and has taught women's self-defence.

Faith

Faith and I have been casual acquaintances for a few years now. She attended McGill University in Montreal, and we met through a mutual friend. Faith was twenty-five at the time of the interview, and working for a Florida tourism agency. Her father is a pilot and she travelled extensively growing up. Her mother is Polynesian, and her father is European Canadian. She spent her early childhood growing up in Calgary - a very "white bread" place, as she put it, but also attended a variety of private schools and exclusive summer schools in France, Fiji and Hawaii. Her family is upper-middle class. Her extended family on her mother's side is very close. As she said, "the women rule in our family." She has one younger sister. Out of all the participants, Faith was probably the most sceptical with my reasons for exploring issues of multiethnicity. While Faith insisted that she was ethnic, she thought my privileging of race and gender often took "political correctness" to its extremes. For this reason, among others, I asked Faith to participate in this study.

Shanti

Shanti is twenty-seven years old, and currently working as a management consultant for a big Toronto firm. She told me she is "composed of three different ethnicities - my Dad is half Persian, half Chinese, and my mother is French-Canadian." We met through a mutual friend who told her about my study, and she readily agreed to be interviewed. She told me that she had "no idea" about race growing up and was thoroughly white identified until her Chinese grandmother moved in with her family when she was six. Suddenly, she realized that there was something "different" about her background and thought she might be adopted. "It was like one big puzzle," she explained. "I became aware of differences, aware that I was different from some of the other kids in my class after that." It wasn't until she was fourteen that her father told her two older brothers, younger sister and herself that he was only half-

Chinese (his father was Persian) which came as a shock to her because she had assumed that she was only part Chinese and part white up until that point. However, she also expressed relief upon discovering that she had Persian heritage as it explained why she looked different from her family. As Shanti put it, "Finally, I understood why I didn't look like either my father or grandmother." Shanti grew up in Ottawa, a large Canadian city east of Toronto, but went to McGill University in Montreal and did her Masters degree in Ottawa. She insisted, "It's never been an issue for me to be mixed - it's only been that I'm not completely white." She strongly identifies with French Canadian culture and speaks French fluently, passed on from her strong ties with her mother's side of the family. During our interview, we both spoke excitedly about her upcoming marriage.

Darius

Darius is an actress currently living in Los Angeles. At 32, she has worked on a variety of television and film productions. Her mother is third generation Japanese Canadian, and her father is a mixture of French-Canadian, Ojibway first nations, and Irish. Darius and Claudia, another participant in this study, are close friends, having met at the "mostly white" University of Western Ontario and both experienced feelings of alienation at the prestigious school. After I interviewed Claudia, she suggested Darius as a possible participant. Darius grew up in Scarborough, which was at the time she was growing up a very "white blue-collar area". She told me that she while she always felt different - "I don't look like either of my parents"- she never associated it with feelings of alienation or not belonging. Darius has significant university education, including a degree in Fine Arts. She has attended a variety of "mixed race" conferences in California. At the end of our interview, Darius gave me a copy of a photographed cv pamphlet she had made to distribute to various acting agencies. At the top is a photograph of her dressed casually in denim, with her name. Below her name it reads, "...makes up a world of difference". The rest of the sheet has several photographs of Darius in various ethnic outfits: dressed as a Hawaiian girl with a lei and a flower tucked behind her hair, another with her in a sari and thick makeup, with a bindi on her forehead and jewels, and another with her as a geisha girl, chopsticks in her hair. Although Darius was embarrassed by the copy sheet as she produced it many years ago, she thought it was important that I take it as an example of how her multiethnic background allowed her to expand her repertoire of ethnic roles.

Shima

Shima is thirty-five years old and has just finished her Masters degree where she interviewed four people of "mixed race" for her thesis requirements. She works with a variety of community organizations developing anti-racist guidelines. I heard about Shima's work from Makeda and contacted her to be interviewed. She identifies as "mixed race" but insists she

didn't always do so easily. Her mother is Scottish and her father South East Asian. She told me that race issues were never discussed growing up in her family. The first ten years of her childhood were spent in Scotland, where she experienced rampant racism. Shima explained how her father experienced internal racism and "...he tried his darndnest to keep us away from South Asian culture," even making up a new last name in order to anglicize his identity. Shima had to dig in his personal files to find out her real last name and secretly got in contact with the Indian side of her family: "...my brother and I had to be detectives kind of into our own life." She "married the first blond-haired, blue-eyed guy that came along" and produced "for my father a boy, a perfect little white baby boy...that was really important." Currently, Shima is a graduate student pursuing a Ph.D. at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education. She has two children with her Asian partner.

Maribel

Maribel is twenty-five and a graduate student in anthropology and genetics at New York University. She grew up in North York, in an upper class neighbourhood. She pursued her first degree at the "Ivy League" college Stanford University, after attending one of the most prestigious private schools in Toronto. A mutual friend suggested her for this study. Maribel is "a child of a mixed marriage, between a Swedish mother and a Bangladeshi father" and has two sisters. Maribel explained that she never really thought about race until she was thirteen, when people started to read her appearance as "exotic". But she didn't start thinking "politically" about her identity until she attended Stanford in California where "the predominant feeling at Stanford was one of money and entitlement, mostly white. And I just didn't want to identify with that whole scene." She told me that she made a conscious decision to associate with people of colour and become involved with radical anti-racist events in college. When she returned to Toronto after her degree, she explained she had a different view of race having lived in the US for four years. Maribel told me she reads her multiethnicity as a source of strength and that it has given her a unique perspective on race issues. It wasn't until well after the interview that we discovered with delight the remarkable coincidence that we had attended the same Montessori school and that I had actually attended one of Maribel's birthday parties as a child.

Marical

Marical and I met at a party a few years ago and hit it off based upon our similar experiences in media. I had heard about her from others before meeting her, however, as I had read some of her poems in an anthology of works from multiethnic women. Her father is an "albino" from South Africa, and her mother is European from New Zealand. Although Marical spent

her early childhood in Winnipeg, she has lived in a variety of places, including New Zealand, Vancouver and Zimbabwe. She studied at the University of Ottawa. Her father is legally blind and a professor of physiotherapy. She explained that issues of race were never discussed in her household until a few years ago. During our interview, she told me she contradicted the “usual tales” of multiethnic individuals wanting to look white by recalling that when she was younger, she wanted to look Asian because she thought Asians were the most beautiful. She is a TV reporter and producer, poet, writer, and political activist in Toronto. Marical broke out into poetic verse during our interview, and we often burst into laughter at various points, where we batted around ideas and talked animatedly about both our upcoming academic pursuits. Marical told me that although she identifies as African-Canadian she doesn’t really feel that she has any strong cultural roots to draw from, and thus wants to return to South Africa for a few years to study. She plans on pursuing an M.A. in communication studies, where she hopes to develop an alternative media language to translate postmodern theory into practice.

Chantal

Chantal is twenty-four years old, and her father is from Trinidad, her mother “British” (of European heritage). She spent a few years of her early childhood in West Africa, as her father teaches African-Caribbean literature in French at university. She grew up in Hamilton, just west of Toronto, and is currently pursuing a journalism degree at Ryerson University in Toronto. She studied African studies for her first degree. She was the only woman in my study who expressed concern that she would “throw off” my data by confessing that being mixed has caused her emotional trauma. Chantal contacted me after hearing about my study from a mutual friend and told me that I was doing research at just the right time because it was important to counter the ignorance proliferating about the multiethnic experience being “the best of all worlds”. She explained that she was envious of her friends who have a strong recollection of their West Indian background, whereas hers is only “second-hand” as she didn’t grow up in Trinidad. When she was younger, she wished that she was white, although she told me that she has now “come full circle on that” and now identifies as black. She still feels residual resentment towards her father, “not because he married a white woman but because he denied that whiteness was part of my culture”. Chantal very carefully problematized the whole idea of being able to choose your identity as a multiethnic individual by saying that the experience depends completely on how that person is perceived racially.

Madeleine

Twenty-seven at the time of the interview, Madeleine works as a television producer during the day, and is the editor in chief of a travel magazine for “Generation X”ers on the

weekends and at night. Both her parents were adopted. Her father's background is "sort of like a mystery"- she believes it might be part Blackfoot Indian, and Cherokee Indian, and her mother's biological family is from Scotland of European descent. Her parents divorced when she was five and she hasn't seen her father since as he "just took off". Madeleine has travelled extensively around the world and has worked in Japan teaching English as a second language. She speaks fluent Japanese. She explained to me that she disliked the term "ethnic" by telling me a story about her magazine. Apparently, somebody had once asked her why she didn't have a women's travel column in her magazine and she responded, "I think women's issues are very important but I would never want to segregate women in my magazine by placing them in a column." She explained that these identity categories, "like gay or minority, are just not particularly descriptive". She grew up in upper middle-class downtown Toronto, and lived in the States for a year in a small town.

Katya

Katya is thirty years old, and a filmmaker in Toronto. I met Katya and Julia at a film premiere in 1994. Her father is black from the West Indies, and her mother from Ireland. She has lived all over the world, including ten years in England, a year in Australia, fourteen years in Canada and five in the West Indies. She and Julia have made a film together about the multiethnic experience. She lives at home where she has a very strong and supportive relationship with her parents. Race has always been openly discussed in her household. As a child, she identified as black, but that perception has changed as she has become older. "At some point, it ceased to be enough," Katya explained. She has lived in "predominantly white and upper to middle class neighbourhoods." She is one of the few participants who told anecdotes attesting to the experience of hostile racism. Katya conveyed throughout the interview that she recognizes she experiences privilege vis-a-vis her extensive university education and upper middle-class standing although she is almost always identified as black by others. She loves her two cats ferociously.

Farideh

Farideh, in her early fifties, was one of my oldest interviewees. She is a radio news producer at the CBC. I contacted her after a colleague in radio suggested I interview her. Her father is Scottish, and her mother Jamaican, but her ancestry has a wide range of ethnicities, including Arawak Indian. Her parents were very liberal growing up and she remembers that as what marked her as different - her parents' left-wing political leanings, not issues of race. She remembers her father her uncle started up a political magazine called "Negro Digest" and celebrating Scottish folk festivals with her aunt growing up. Many of Farideh's parents' friends were Jewish, and Farideh attended a Jewish school in Toronto which may have

contributed to her decision to adopt Judaism later in life. Farideh was married young and believes that constitutes a strong part of her identity. She has two teenaged children.

Davy

Davy is a lesbian in her forties, and is of black, white and First Nations ancestry. She was born in Toronto. She is a writer, visual artist, women's health worker, and has edited an anthology of the voices of multiethnic women. I contacted Davy in 1994 after her anthology was published and we met for lunch, when she agreed to be interviewed. She explained that she grew up in an "all-white" suburb of Toronto and narrated several experiences of racism. Davy told me that as a child, she was not confused about her race because she "...didn't know her race at all." Davy was adopted, and her adoptive parents were both white. "I was never informed by my parents that I was black," she said. Davy remembers poring over "National Geographic" magazines as a child because they featured articles about people from Tahiti. Prior to discovering that she was part black, the faces in the magazine most closely resembled her own appearance. Various experiences of cultural alienation led her to develop the anthology to bring to the forefront the voices of women of multiethnicity. She is currently finishing up a degree in the humanities at University of Toronto, is a cat-lover, and the mother of two young adults.

Sara

Sara was twenty-four at the time of the interview. I met her through a friend, who had asked if she would consent to being interviewed for this study. Her mother is Philipino, her father Irish. Although her mother laments that she "produced a white kid," Sara insists that she's "not white but Philipino." She participates in many Philipino cultural events with her mother's side of the family. She has a younger sister. She explained that her parents have a rocky marriage, where her father patronizes her mother: "he feels like he is superior and is civilizing my mother." However, her mother's extended family all live in Toronto and thus Sara explained that she has a very strong support network. Sara explained that at times she feels alienated from the Philipino community because she is "part white," even though she speaks fluent Tagalog. "I've actually had kids come up to me and say, 'It's better to be a pure Philipino than it is to be a half Philipino.'" In a way, I felt isolated from that group," she admitted. Sara felt that she hadn't experienced racism because she doesn't look like she is part of a visible minority, although when she was younger, people used to think that her mother was her nanny. She told me that most of her friends and the people she continues to gravitate towards are Philipinos and blacks. Although she has been identified by others as mostly Italian and Irish, she vehemently opposes being perceived as white. "I am Philipino," she said firmly, although she remembers being called "phonky" with laughter - part Philipino, part "honky" - by friends in high school. Sara is currently pursuing her B.A. at University of

Toronto while working part-time in a retail outlet. She is living in a middle-class Toronto suburb with her parents.

Kiirti

Kiirti is twenty-six and adopted. She called me after her friend Madeleine told her how much she had enjoyed being interviewed. Both Kiirti's biological and adoptive parents were an interracial couple which attests to the state's attempt to place adopted multiethnic children in multiracial environments.¹ Her biological mother is Irish and English, and her biological father is a combination of French, Caribbean-Indian, and African. Her adoptive parents divorced when she was four, and her African father moved to Jamaica. Although she visited him a few times, she lived with her mother and brother who were both white. Kiirti explained that she grew up "in Toronto, in a fairly, in an all-white, fairly upper-class neighbourhood, attended an all-white school, and had all white friends." Issues of race were not openly discussed in her household. She told me she realized she was black for the first time when she expressed an interest in a boy and was told with disdain by a friend, "he doesn't date black girls." She met her biological parents a few years ago, and that had a significant impact upon the way she read her identity. "For the first time, I really had an answer for the question, where are you from?" she explained, although she has not kept in close contact with either one of her biological parents since. Out of all my informants, Kiirti had the least schooling as she had not finished high school. She wanted to be interviewed because she feels that one of the biggest challenges facing her as a multiethnic person is taking pride in who she is and demanding the need not to be pigeon-holed. Kiirti is working as a waitress in Toronto and is contemplating returning to high school to obtain her diploma.

Zillah

Zillah and I met as students at McGill University and have kept in touch ever since. She is a journalist. Her mother is from Jamaica and her father is from Northern Ontario, although he has an Irish Scottish background. She lived most of her life in a suburb just north of Toronto, in an upper middle class environment where few black people lived. Zillah told me that growing up, she was very white-identified, so much so that when she discovered she had an aptitude for track and field, she deliberately shied away from pursuing athletics because she didn't want to appear "too black." She remembers being called racial slurs like "jungle

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There is a wealth of literature regarding "transracial adoptions" and the politics surrounding the adoption of a multiethnic child into a European family. I have not explored the topic in great depth here. I refer the reader to Ifekwunigwe (forthcoming).

bunny” in high school and being puzzled, not knowing what that meant. She always considered herself unattractive, even when she was asked to start modelling for a top agency in Toronto. She added that her short modelling career further confused issues of femininity and beauty for her in regards to being multiethnic, and that her self-esteem rose after spending a year as an exchange student in France, where the men found her more attractive. Since attending McGill, a university with a diverse ethnic environment, she no longer identifies as white and has explored her ethnic roots, wishing that she had done so earlier. At the time of the interview, she had just returned from Guyana, where she had been a freelance journalist. Most of her friends are either black or multiethnic. We talked a lot about hair during our interview, as Zillah explained that she has what would be known as “good hair” among her black friends and that her locks had been the source of much resentment from black women because it was straight and long. Zillah is currently writing for a newspaper in Ottawa.

Mataria

Mataria is the best friend of one of my cousins, although we didn’t discover this connection until our interview. She contacted me after her friend, Shanti, was interviewed and said it was a good experience. Mataria is twenty-six, and her mother is Armenian, and her father is East-Indian Sikh and they met at the University of Beirut. Although there was initial objection to the marriage, Zillah explained that her family “came around” and she experiences close ties to both sides of her parents’ family. She has a younger brother and sister. Although she was born in England, she grew up in Toronto, in an upper middle class neighbourhood. Zillah said she never felt different growing up because she lived in a very diverse ethnic environment where “everyone was ethnic.” Zillah attended both Armenian and South-East Asian “Sunday morning” language and culture classes growing up. She now speaks fluent Armenian. She studied math and physiology at McGill in Montreal. Zillah identifies as brown, said that she doesn’t remember any racist incidents growing up and that she feels lucky not to have experienced any outward hostility. Zillah’s parents are racist, and have told her that they would prefer it if she didn’t date black men, which Zillah finds highly hypocritical. Zillah still lives at home, despite her parents’ racist sentiments: “I just do what I want,” Zillah explained. We talked a lot about political correctness, and the ways in which discussions about race often create anxiety. She acknowledged her own racism, as she caught herself making jokes about Chinese drivers during our interview. She works in the computer software field as a systems analyst.

Rose

Rose is twenty-two years old and a student at Ryerson University, where she is president of the Multiracial Association. Rose was one of my shyer interviewees. Her father is East Indian

and her mother French Canadian. She holds a first degree in fashion design from McGill university in Montreal. She grew up in Willowdale, a suburb just north of Toronto, and attended french immersion schools. Although she was called racial slurs growing up, she kept it private, never telling her parents about it as issues of race were not openly discussed. She recalled wanting to look white when she was younger, and even told people that she was Portuguese instead of Indian, because that made her seem “more white”. She is now “really ashamed” of that, as once she got to university she began to explore various cultures in greater detail, which she attributes to McGill’s diverse ethnic composition. Rose started up the Multiracial Association a few months before our interview in order to provide a comfortable environment for multiethnic individuals to discuss issues of race. She believes that it is important for multiethnic people to accept both parts of them rather than restrict themselves to marrying only one over the other, or identifying one over the other. She also insisted that being multiethnic is more than just being “...either black or white or both...there are other mixes out there which aren’t getting discussed.” She has travelled in Europe and speaks a little Italian.

Zenia

Zenia was twenty-one at the time of the interview. I met her when I interviewed her for a job at my summer camp, and although I didn’t hire her, I was impressed by her headstrong manner. I called her when I was ready to carry out interviews and she said she would be thrilled to participate. When asked where she’s from, Zenia said, “Well, I was born in Canada, therefore, I’m Canadian. That’s how I look at it. I’m Canadian through and through. But my parents, that’s another question. My father is from Sri Lanka and my mother from Norway.” She spent her early childhood in Montreal, and grew up in a middle class neighbourhood in a suburb around Toronto. Zenia was vehement that people living in Canada should identify as Canadian first and place their ethnic ties in the foreground. Her interview demonstrated that she had an excellent grasp of Canadian history, as she would often launch into mini-lectures explaining that too many Canadians were ignorant about their own history. She says she never resented being multiethnic, nor wished she was white. She speaks fluent French and Norwegian and has visited Norway several times. She loves animals, and works as a veterinarian assistant in Northern Ontario.

APPENDIX II

The Interview Questions

What follows is the list of questions I asked participants in this study. This list was devised after consulting with television journalists and another multiethnic woman who had recently finished her own MA on the topic of multiethnicity (see Ray 1996). The interview questions also underwent a “test run” with five multiethnic friends whereupon I received useful feedback on how to improve the questions. However, it is imperative to note that I never used all of the questions here to structure the interview, as the list is very long. Normally, I would ask the first question and then the rest of the interview would proceed largely without my prodding.

Preamble:

This is just an opportunity for you to tell me a little about your life as related to the development of your ideas about race and your own racial identity. Feel free to butt in any time, and if you feel any of the questions take you down paths you're not willing to travel with me, just let me know. If any of the questions seem skewed or inappropriate, just tell me and we'll go on from there.

INTRODUCTION

Why don't we begin by you giving me your name, your age and a little bit about yourself?

YOU AND YOUR FAMILY

How did your parents meet?

How did you first become aware of race and racial difference growing up?

When did you first become aware of the racial difference between you and your parents?

Were issues of race openly discussed in your household when you were growing up?

Can you recall when you first consciously became aware of skin colour?

Has anyone on either side of your family ever commented about the fact that you are multiethnic? What impressions did you get from this?

Did you ever notice one of your parents ill at ease with members of your other parent's family?

Did your parents expose you equally to the main heritages/cultural traditions of both sides of your family?

Is it important for multiethnic children to be exposed equally to both racial sides of their respective families?

Do you think both your parents understood what it was to be a multiethnic child?

Did you ever protect your parents by not telling them about some racist experience growing up?

Do multiethnic children have special needs that other children might not have?

Is there anything you wish your parents or other family members could have done differently in raising you?

YOU AND YOUR CHILDHOOD

Do you have any memories that you can recall about how racism and racial difference were articulated when you were younger?

What was the ethnic composition of your grade school like?

Did this have an impact upon how comfortable you felt in grade school?

Did you face any pressure to identify with a particular ethnic group?

Did you ever get teased as a child in part due to your ethno-racial background?

How did it make you feel? What did you want to tell them?

Do you remember the first time someone asked you about your ethnoracial appearance? How did you respond?

Did you pay attention to who was asking the question? And if so, did you answer the question differently depending on who was doing the asking? How?

Did any childhood friends question you about your ethnoracial heritage when they met your parents?

Can you recall your first conversation with someone about being multiethnic? What transpired?

Was any stage in your childhood development painful because you were multiethnic?

Did you ever wish you were a different ethnicity growing up?

Among what groups of kids did you feel most comfortable?

Do you remember any experiences which related to your ethnoracial identity or appearance in high school?

What were they and how did they affect you?

Did you have any difficulty relating to teens who were from a homogeneous family background?

Do you remember a time when someone assumed you were from a particular ethnic background? What happened?

Do you think your ethnoracial identity had an impact upon how happy you were as a child?

Some studies that I've looked at intonate that the multiethnic child is suffering an identity crisis: "the poor child is confused and doesn't know which side to choose". What do you think about that?

Some other studies claim that multiethnic kids are forced to claim one ethnic identity over the other. What do you think about that for yourself?

YOU AND YOUR SIBLINGS

Do your brothers and sisters look like you?

Did people assume you were related? If not, how did you deal with it?

Do you think your sibling has experienced more/less racism than you?

Have you and your siblings employed different strategies to deal with racism?

Have you talked about being multiethnic with your sibling(s)?

YOU AND LABELS

When people ask you where you're from, how do you respond?

How has your response to that question changed over time?

How do you feel about questions like "where are you from?"

Where do people generally assume you're from?

How do you feel about that?

Have you ever become upset when someone has asked you about your ethnic background? Why and what happened?

What do you say or feel about people who tell you, "Oh, you're not really "x" ethnicity"?

Do you identify with one culture over the other?

In your experience, do people generally perceive you as being black, bi-racial or other? Who does? Under what circumstances?

How do you feel about the following labels in terms of how you define yourself? Are there stereotypes inherent within them?

- a) mulatto
- b) bi-racial
- c) mixed race
- d) multiethnicity
- e) woman of colour

(What do you think about the category "women of colour"? Have you ever used this phrase to identify yourself?)

- f) black
- g) white

Have you ever used one of these terms to define yourself? When did you stop/start and why?

What are some other categories and labels that people have used to identify you?

How do you feel about those names? Do they give you enough space to identify yourself?

Do you find that you use different ethnic labels to identify yourself?

What are your feelings on race?

As a multiethnic woman, do you feel you have a unique way of seeing race?

Has being multiethnic increased your sensitivity towards race?

Does being multiethnic have an influence on the way you see race relations in Canada?

Do you see yourself as either black or white?

Have racial designations changed for you as you have become older?

How would you like to identify yourself?

Do you think it's important for people to move beyond labels?

IMAGES OF BEAUTY

Is there any connection between how comfortable you are with your appearance and being multiethnic?

What role does your appearance play in how you feel about your multiethnic identity?

Who do you think you look like?

How have you thought about your level of physical attractiveness over time?

Do you think that being attractive and being multiethnic are somehow related? How?

Were you ever uncomfortable with the way you look based on your multiethnic background? Sometimes multiethnic women are seen as exotic. Have you ever been called that or something similar?

What do you think about that term?

YOU AND RACISM

Have you experienced any racism?

Has anyone in your family ever unconsciously made a racist statement (by forgetting you were there)?

Have you ever surprised someone when you told them you were from a particular ethnic background?

Have you ever realized that you have been unconsciously racist yourself?

How has your own ethnic background influenced how you feel towards black people? white people? People who are multiethnic?

ADVANTAGES/DISADVANTAGES OF BEING MULTIETHNIC

What do you like about being multiethnic? What are some of the advantages?

Are there any privileges that come from being multiethnic? (Have you ever experienced any privilege?)

What don't you like about being multiethnic? What are some of the disadvantages?

What are some of the most common misconceptions about people who are multiethnic?

Are there any myths about multiethnic women that you know of that you'd like to dispel?

Where are some of the different places that people assume you're from? How is that communicated?

Did you ever let anyone assume that you were of a specific ethnicity?

Has anyone ever indirectly made a racist comment around you?

Have you ever been able to move within different ethnic circles? How?

Have you ever used your multiethnic appearance to your own advantage?

Where do you feel most comfortable with your identity (geographical locations)?

What was it like visiting those places?

Have you ever hidden a particular aspect of your ethnicity from someone? Why?

Identifying yourself

How do you define your ethnic background to others?

How do you talk about your ethnicity to someone (of your mother's) ethnicity?

How do you discuss your ethnicity to someone (of your father's) ethnicity?

How do you talk about your ethnic background to someone who is black?

How do you talk about your ethnic background to someone who is white?

Who takes the most interest in your ethnic background? Women? Men?

When you're travelling, how do you define your ethnicity?

How others see you

Does the way people perceive your ethnic heritage change when you go to different places?

How do others within your neighbourhood community identify you racially?

How do others within your workplace community identify you?

How do others within certain ethnic communities identify you?

How do you feel about the way people perceive your ethnic background?

NATIONAL IDENTITIES

What do you think about multiculturalism?

As a child, was your education multiculturalism in any way?

Does being multiethnic have any influence upon the way you see being Canadian?

What are your ties to Canada?

What does it mean to be "a Canadian?"

When have you felt most Canadian?

Do you feel an allegiance to either of your parents' countries?

Do you think you would have more or less problems with racism in Canada or America?

YOU AND OTHER MULTIETHNIC PEOPLE

Were you brought up in a setting that included other multiethnic children?

Did you ever feel a special connection with other multiethnic children?

Did you make friends with kids who looked like you? Was there a particular ethnic group that you were drawn to as a child?

Did you feel more comfortable within certain ethnic groups of people growing up?

Have you ever approached someone because you thought they were multiethnic? What happened? Did you ever goof up?

Do you think people who are multiethnic share certain experiences? Like what?

How do you feel about your vision of other multiethnic people?

What does it mean to be multiethnic to you?

YOU AND CHALLENGES

What's a big challenge facing you as a woman who is multiethnic?

What else do you think is important from all your lived experience for people to keep in mind or remember about people who are multiethnic?

What are your major concerns for your own children as multiethnic individuals?

Who should be allowed to call themselves multiethnic?

IN THE FUTURE

How do your children identify themselves ethnically?

What are some issues which concern you as a multiethnic parent?

What can people do to be more respectful of the needs of multiethnic individuals?

How do you understand or construct your identity today?

Is there anything that you feel we haven't discussed today which you'd like to bring up?

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